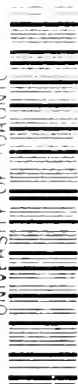


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RECOLLECTIONS OF
FRED LESLIE







FRED LESLIE AS THE PROFESSOR

RECOLLECTIONS OF
FRED LESLIE

BY
W. T. VINCENT

WITH INTRODUCTION BY CLEMENT SCOTT

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WITH 179 ILLUSTRATIONS

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RECOLLECTIONS OF
F R E D L E S L I E

CHAPTER XVI

AT THE GAIETY

*There be many Cæsars
Ere such another Julius.*—CYMBELINE.

LITTLE JACK SHEPPARD had a merry time at the Gaiety, and no pair of actors were ever more happily associated than Fred Leslie and Nellie Farren. It was during the run of this play that an amusing incident occurred.

Miss Nellie Farren, whose ready wit and promptitude have earned for her the character of a strong-minded actress, is really as nervous as any lady on the stage, and cannot bear to be interrupted by any interference with her work. She was one night in the midst of a soliloquy, when Fred, who was waiting in the wing, mistook his cue and walked on to the stage. Nellie, though much disturbed, made an effort and kept her presence of mind but her face flushed through

the carmine as she turned upon the intruder and exclaimed, "Be off, sir; you are not wanted here!" Meekly obeying, Fred saw the serious



HERR MEYER LUTZ

character of his offence, and said to those about him, "I am in for a good wiggling from Nellie when she comes off." Then he thought of a plan to evade her reproaches, and going towards her

as she left the stage he began to look hurt, and asked her how she could have so disgraced him as to order him off the stage in the presence of the audience. He seemed in such distress that poor Nellie forgot her resentment, and gave him instead all the comforting regrets and apologies which her good and generous heart could suggest. Fred thought he got out of that scrape rather cleverly.

But, with all the professional courtesy for which he was proverbial, he was once reported to the stage-manager—and by a lady. She was an actress of much beauty, and has been vastly photographed. Fortunately there are many such, and she will not be identified. She was playing principal boy's part in a burlesque, and had in the course of the dialogue to taunt Fred, who was some Count or other, with his non-success in wooing the heroine. "She loves not you but me," was the stinging line, whereupon Fred, who was looking with admiration at the pretty face before him, remarked, "I suppose you have given her one of your photographs." The beauty was so much annoyed that she burst into tears in the middle of the stage and then went off and complained to the stage-manager. Poor Fred was dreadfully sorry for the serious consequences of his little speech, and made profuse apologies, which the lady, who soon recovered her

equanimity, gracefully accepted, laughing at her own weakness and folly.

Mr. J. L. Toole has a recollection of Fred's "Jonathan Wild" which illustrates the fact that no form of pleasantry, not even the despised pun, is foreign to the modern exponent of burlesque. Leslie indeed was rather partial to a play upon words. Mr. Toole's example happened when he was one of an audience at the Gaiety, witnessing a performance of *Little Jack Sheppard*. He was in a box and was soon recognised by his friends upon the stage. In the prison scene Leslie, as "Jonathan Wild," when pursuing the runaways, picked up something from the floor and exclaimed significantly, "Ah, a good old file here—another Jail (J. L.) Tool(e)." "Something of the same sort" (says Mr. Toole) "has no doubt been often attempted, but I am satisfied that it was original on Leslie's part, and it fitted the situation so exactly that I could not help applauding."

Among the observations in the press relative to Leslie's "Jonathan Wild" were frequent expressions of the lament at the "waste of genius" upon such material as burlesque, and his manifest capability for superior work. That he could do better he knew. Indeed it may have been noticed that, although he was fated to achieve his highest honours in performances of the burlesque type, his earliest efforts upon the professional

stage were chiefly confined to comedy and drama. It may almost be said that he drifted into comic opera and extravaganza rather than followed his own choice. But he fully believed that his powers were not exercised to their fullest advantage in such work, and he often sighed for the time when he should rise to worthier efforts. Nevertheless there is no doubt whatever that in taking the line he did, he was but following his instinct and inclination. Even before he took to the stage he spoke of the business of a pantomime as being his leading aim, and not many months before he died he expressed a hope that he should at no very distant date produce a pantomime in his own theatre, and play in it himself. Yet he was always longing to shine in comedy, and, as already recounted, he made several creditable attempts. He played "Sir Peter Teazle" in *The School for Scandal* in May, 1881, at a matinée performance at the Globe Theatre, and he has appeared in the same part and others of a like description several times in London. In so doing, however, it can scarcely be said that he either advanced his public reputation or justified the assumption that he was out of his proper element in burlesque. In 1886 he took another step.

Leslie's views on the subject of "benefits" were not particularly firm. As a form of amusement he considered that benefit performances were

sociable and agreeable, and he seldom missed being present as one of the audience when anything of the kind was on hand. His frequent appearances among the entertainers on such occasions showed his sympathy with them as an institution, as well as a disposition to help the special object of each undertaking, and the fact that his face was seen over the footlights at benefits less frequently in later than in former years, was due, not to any indisposition on his part, but solely to the growing, and not unnatural, objection of managers to make their artists too cheap. In this respect Leslie always bowed to the slightest wish of his manager, feeling that, as the whole of his services were given to the theatre, his abilities were not his own to hawk about in public places for the advantage of himself or any one else. These were his opinions in regard to benefits of necessity. On the question whether prosperous actors ought to take benefits he was also inclined to halt. He saw no reason why any man should not make as much money as he could, provided it was not to the detriment of any other man, and he contended that an actor—Mr. Irving, for instance—in giving a special form of entertainment in the name of a benefit was conferring a great pleasure on a certain number of people, and was therefore fully justified in the proceeding. But, in practice, Leslie did not take many benefits, for two

different reasons at different periods of his life. When he was unknown and would have been glad of a benefit, nobody thought of giving him one. After he was known and could have had any number of benefits for the asking, he did not want them enough to take the trouble of adding another engagement to the already hard week's work. However, after "Jonathan Wild" had been careering for six months, and *Little Jack Sheppard* had grown a trifle monotonous, he had a desire to exploit for variety's sake in the paths of comedy, and he decided, with due permission from the management, to try, as for his benefit, the attractive part of "David Garrick." In doing this he was daring comparison with other contemporary comedians who had played the same rôle with good effect from time to time, not to mention the great and original Sothern, still well remembered by elder playgoers. He therefore entered upon his task with some degree of trepidation, and he had further to his disadvantage all the nervousness which naturally belongs to a scratch performance. The date was May 12th, 1886, and the characters were assorted thus :

DAVID GARRICK.

Squire Chivy	.	.	.	.	Mr. EDWD. RIGHTON.
Simon Ingot	.	.	.	.	Mr. W. HARGREAVES.
David Garrick	.	.	.	.	Mr. FRED. LESLIE.
Mr. Smith	.	.	.	.	Mr. GEO. SHELTON.
Mr. Brown	.	.	.	.	Mr. W. CHEESMAN.

Mr. Jones	Mr. FRANK WOOD.
George	Mr. C. PRESCOTT.
Thomas	Mr. HASLEM.
Ada Ingot	Miss KATE RORKE.
Mrs. Smith	Miss JANE COVENEY.
Araminta Brown	Miss KATE JAMES.

(This was followed by a miscellaneous entertainment and a scene from *Jack Sheppard*.)

Leslie made a special and careful study of the part of "Garrick," and designedly gave a new reading to the character, rather more humorous than the accepted versions, a proceeding which the critics in the papers almost unanimously condemned. His friends were, naturally perhaps, unanimously of the other way of thinking, and at the close of the performance he was persuaded that there was a possibility of his some day escaping from the trammels of burlesque and attaining to that "something higher" which had so often been held up to his ambition. But when he saw the press-notices in the morning he took them as a hint to be satisfied where he was, and said he should stick to burlesque.

However, the critique in the *Era*, which may be presumed to represent the opinions of the dramatic profession itself, was decidedly complimentary. The following extract may be quoted:

"The part of 'David Garrick' will ever be associated with the name and fame of the late Mr. Edward Sothorn, and the

greatest compliment we can pay Mr. Leslie—and it is one that is well merited—is to say that he proved a worthy successor of that popular comedian. He began well with Garrick's enthusiasm in the remembrance of the fair lady who at the theatre has manifested such interest in his work, and has fired his soul to brilliant efforts. Garrick, it will be remembered, readily undertakes to assist Mr. Alderman Ingot in curing the infatuation of his daughter Ada, who, having seen the actor act, has fallen in love with him. Very admirably did Mr. Leslie suggest the regret Garrick experiences on discovering in Ada Ingot the young lady who has inspired him with interest by her evident appreciation of his acting. Having given his word to the father, Garrick determines to go through with his task, and so, in order to disenchant his fair worshipper, he proceeds to disgust her. He puts on the disguise of drunkenness, he defies all the rules of polite society, he pokes fun at her father's guests, he ridicules everything and everybody, and he so plays the buffoon and the boor that the father's purpose is served, and poor fond and foolish Ada is forced to admit that her beautiful idol has feet of clay. The whole of the business of this scene was carried out with skill and humour by Mr. Leslie, who at the end found the laughter that his efforts had provoked followed by the most enthusiastic applause. Garrick's representative here has to descend to all manner of extravagant antics, but in the last act there is scope for something better. Deep feeling and fine delicacy and manly tenderness marked Mr. Leslie's treatment of the scene where Garrick, even while acknowledging the love Ada Ingot has inspired within him, warns her against the sin of disobedience to her father's commands, and pictures the remorse that would be sure to follow. Here we get something in splendid contrast with what has gone before, and it is only due to Mr. Leslie to say that he was more than equal to his work, and that his triumph was beyond dispute. . . . The remain-

ing parts were well handled, and the curtain fell amid loud applause suggestive of much enjoyment."

The following is a sample of the notices in the daily papers :

"It was not at all surprising that when Mr. Fred Leslie announced a 'benefit matinée' a crowded house should be the result. In addition to his claims on the public as an artist of remarkable intelligence and versatility, Mr. Leslie is well known as the first to come forward to help his brother and sister artistes or to support any recognised charitable object. These complimentary occasions are sometimes seized in order to exploit some new experiment or to suddenly break out in a new line of character. So Mr. Leslie for the first time played 'David Garrick,' one of the first plays Robertson ever wrote, one of the strongest successes Sothorn ever made. The revival of this wholesome, instructive, and interesting play drags the memory back regretfully to bygone years. . . . Folks laughed yesterday afternoon right heartily; they accepted pantomime for comedy and preaching for pathos. They cheered the play and the actors, but none of them understood even dimly the purpose of the play of *David Garrick*. It is no half-way house between burlesque and comedy; it cannot be acted with one leg longing to dance a breakdown and the other disposed to start in tragedy. Garrick is a man, not a caricature. He is a reality, or Ada Ingot would never have loved him, so his presence should be natural; he has a heart, or the play has no meaning. Mr. Leslie gave us a comic performance that hugely tickled his audience, but it was not David Garrick. . . ."

All that was said of him, good or bad, Fred accepted without any show of feeling, and it was sometimes his humour to join in chorus with the

malcontents. When a friend sought to console him for one of his disappointments, he said :

“The greatest pleasure I ever received in my life, was when I had made a ghastly failure, and knew it myself, as well as from the papers, which one and all went for my scalp. I had gone to the club after the performance, and so had not seen my children, who, little knowing I was an actor, had been taken to the first night by their mother. I was sitting after breakfast trying to digest the bad ‘notices’ which I knew I deserved, when one of them came in, and jumping on my knee and kissing me, said ‘Good morning, papa ; and thank you so much for sending us to see the funny man who made us laugh so.’ I knew then that I could not have been so bad as I and the critics thought, for I had made some one laugh and fulfilled my end in life.”

He was, however, addicted to self-disparagement, especially with his interviewers. To one, after running through his autobiography, he said in his jocular manner :

“After the foregoing remarks, it may not surprise you to learn that I was born on All Fool’s Day, 1855.”

He delighted to indulge in this mock depreciation of his own abilities, and thus described his *début* upon the stage :

“I made my first appearance in 1878, at the Royalty Theatre, as ‘Colonel Hardy’ in *Paul Pry*. This was an eventful performance for the prompter, who was accorded a unanimous call *and took it*, in place of your imperfect disobedient servant. Later on I tried to play ‘Sir Anthony Absolute’ to the ‘Mrs. Malaprop’ of Mrs. Stirling, and ‘Bob Acres’ of Mr. Edward Terry at the Globe Theatre, without accessories, and have no hesitation in

repeating the general opinion expressed on that occasion—that I was the worst ever seen up till that time, and, in my own opinion, up to the present. On the other hand, for my performance of ‘Sir Peter Teazle’—remember I was but twenty-five years of age—at the same theatre I called forth several eulogiums.’”

After *David Garrick* Leslie for a time repressed his thirst for conquest in new fields, but in less than a year (it was on the 25th of April, 1887), in order to oblige a professional friend, and also to gratify his own taste for change, he appeared at the Gaiety Theatre in serious drama. The newspapers generally found little in it for commendation or encouragement, but the following friendly notice appeared in the *Kentish Independent* :

“*Twice Married*’, a drama by Mr. O’Neill and Mr. Sylvester, is not strong in story nor brilliant in dialogue, but it afforded Mr. Fred Leslie a fine opportunity of displaying another side of his genius in a pathetic, and almost tragic, part. He represented an old shipwright, whose wife, startled by the reappearance of a former husband, long thought dead, deserts her happy home, and leaves behind her a letter of such equivocal suggestion as to deprive the old man of his reason. His paroxysm of despair was grand, intense, and most effective, and the subsequent behaviour of the poor demented creature was no less forcible and impressive. But the latter portion of the play was unfortunately weak, and a most unfortunate anti-climax utterly ruined the *dénouement*. None of the actors, therefore, had a fair chance, and, although it is possible that it may be seen again with Mr. Leslie in the cast, it must first be entirely remoulded.”

Beyond this transparently biased report, Leslie

got very little encouragement to pursue the genius of comedy, but there is now good reason to believe that many of the critics who were adverse to his attempts came to modify their views on later reflection, and especially after he had gone beyond the reach of criticism. *The Sporting Life* of Dec. 14th, 1892, said :

“Leslie had no rival. There were mimics nearly as clever—but only nearly—and vocalists as gifted. But, the combination was unique. When whistling was elevated by Fashion into a fine art, thanks to the performances of Mrs. Shaw and other warblers, Fred Leslie whistled, and easily placed himself at the head of expositors of the glorified piping. It may be said that those who have heard Fred Leslie sing that rare ballad of ‘Lowther Arcadia’—his own writing and composition—with its daintily true and delicately comic imitations, have listened to a performance without a parallel, and one that will never again be equalled, much less surpassed. He was infinitely dexterous in all he undertook, and over and above his perfect mastery of complex, picturesquely contrasted, and subtle technique, there ran through his work the indescribable fusion of a genius that held spectator and auditor under a spell. Scant justice has been done to Fred Leslie’s experiments in the higher drama. Each of these proved that he might have taken the proudest place in comedy, if such had been his desire. . ‘Sir John Vesey,’ in *Money* ; ‘Sir Peter Teazle,’ in *School for Scandal* ; ‘Sir Anthony Absolute,’ in *The Rivals* ; ‘Dr. Ollapod,’ in *The Poor Gentleman* ; and ‘David Garrick’ in Tom Robertson’s well-known comedy may be mentioned in proof of his amazing versatility. His Garrick was really a fine impersonation. He was not the man to ‘grizzle’ much at the reception which his experiments met with at the hands of the critics, but I have always thought that

the ungenerosity with which his Garrick was received by certain of my brethren of the pen hurt him. He felt, and rightly, that the good in that effort was deserving of fairer recognition."

The *Hawk* of Dec. 13th, 1892, exclaimed :

"How many of the tardy discoverers of the greatness of his acting, as revealed in 'Rip Van Winkle,' 'Jonathan Wild,' and other impersonations, had a word of welcome for him when he had the hardihood to essay the part of 'David Garrick?' Those who did not snub him for his audacity sneered more or less covertly at the mere burlesque actor poaching upon a preserve which Mr. Charles Wyndham—after Sothern and Mr. Edward Compton—had made his own."

Another newspaper, referring to a special opportunity which once presented itself, said :

"Leslie would have succeeded at anything on the stage. He was a born actor. It isn't so long ago on one of his visits to America that he was asked in all seriousness to play 'Romeo' to Mary Anderson's 'Juliet.'"

Nevertheless, those in his confidence knew that he loved burlesque, and the form of burlesque in which he was usually seen fitted him exactly—because he made it himself. But he did not expect men of exalted tastes to admire it. He was satisfied if the public would come and laugh, and postponed his other ambitions for other opportunities. He was firmly resolved that when the time came for him to take a theatre he would try to please everybody, and himself into the bargain, by putting in the bill a good

comedy and a rattling burlesque (if not even a pantomime) and taking a part in each.

Leslie indeed had many sides to his genius, and his critics and biographers have been apt to judge him by the side which presented itself at the moment of contemplation. Hence many diverse opinions have been expressed not only as to his capabilities, but also as to his inclinations.

A personal acquaintance writes :

“Fred Leslie often regretted that his great success in burlesque prevented him from doing higher dramatic work, towards which his artistic nature yearned ; and that it was the demand of the public for burlesque tending more and more towards the ‘variety’ entertainment that obliged him to depart further and further from his own artistic ideal. He said, ‘If a man once puts up an umbrella on the stage and gets a laugh out of it, he has to do it always.’ When asked, on the eve of his first voyage to Australia, whether he intended always devoting himself to burlesque, he replied, ‘Not longer than I can possibly help, for I find—as others have found—that constant burlesque acting is very wearing to the physique, and gradually ruins the voice. As soon as possible I shall go back to comedy.’ In speaking, further, of the arduousness of burlesque acting, he said : ‘We have to invent so much ourselves in modern burlesque. The old burlesques depending so much more upon the dialogue, the actors were not so much dependent on their own resources. Nowadays we have to ‘build up’ the parts more, and in doing so, I always try to evolve as much fun as possible out of ‘properties.’ When a new part is given to me, I see at once what ‘properties’ I can introduce, and to what comic uses I can adapt them. To this end I never rehearse without them.”

Fred's mother went to see him play "Garrick," and sat in the shadow of her box weeping at the play's reminder of her own experience. In the third act Garrick advises the love-sick girl in touching language to study her father's wishes, and recounts to her his regret at having taken to the stage in opposition to his mother's admonition. This portrayed to the eyes of the lady in the box a scene in her own life, and, in defiance of her pride in her son, it filled her with sadness, for Mrs. Hobson never faltered in her unswerving dislike to his chosen career. She says :

"When he reached an age to decide for himself, he came to me and told me definitely that he had resolved upon being an actor. I tried to dissuade him, but I had to go away about that time to visit a sick relative at a distance, and when I returned he had taken the step which I dreaded. When I next saw him, and he told me of his hopes and prospects, I gave him counsel which I hoped would be for the best under the circumstances, and in order to induce him to be frugal with his earnings, I told him that for every sovereign which he saved each year I would give him two. Of course, as his salary advanced, I could not keep my promise, and, of course, after the first year or two the subject was never mentioned except as a joke."

Fred made a resolve from the time he began to earn £3 a week that he would save half his salary, and he kept his vow.

CHAPTER XVII

ON TOUR

*Her track, where'er the goddess roves,
Glory pursue.*—GRAY.

LITTLE JACK SHEPPARD started in the autumn of 1886 upon a tour in the provinces, and the famous Gaiety company was everywhere received with rapture. It was a sort of triumphal progress, which they fairly enjoyed, especially when not too far divided from their friends. While at Brighton they had many visitors from London, and on one occasion Fred's love of a joke was vented in a curious freak. Most of the Gaiety folk were staying at "The Gloucester Hotel," whence Leslie and two companions went over to Chichester by rail to visit Goodwood Races. The weather was fine when they left Brighton, but before they reached Chichester the rain came down in torrents. They waited for two hours at the station, and, seeing no hope of improvement, they got back to Brighton, where the sun was still shining. Arrived at their hotel, they ordered a bottle of wine as a consoler for their disappoint-

ment, and while taking consolation, still decked in their light attire, field-glasses and other paraphernalia, they were surprised by Phillips, the acting manager of the theatre, who could not understand their early return from the racecourse. Fred instantly realised his opportunity, and, after an audible aside to the effect that the secret must become known sooner or later, said to Phillips, "The fact is, old fellow, we just went over to back the winner of the first race and cleared a thousand pounds between us. Join us in another bottle." Half an hour afterwards the news was all over Brighton; the three friends were pointed out as they walked the parade, and other friends were waiting at the corners to borrow money of them. Next day the news reached London, and for several days it was an item of gossip at the sporting and theatrical clubs. A remarkable part of the story is the fact that Leslie did not know the winner of the race, nor any horse engaged in it; but he was glad to find by the evening paper that his reputation for veracity had been confirmed, for the winner was a ten to one chance.

During the country tour a new burlesque was being got ready at the Gaiety, and Leslie, in a letter, dated Prince's Theatre, Bristol, Nov. 3rd, 1886, says:

"George Edwardes came here last evening and entertained the whole company to a splendid spread, and Charlie 'Arris, who

accompanied him, entertained us with a scenario of the new burlesque, *Monte Cristo*, to be produced at the Gaiety Theatre on Saturday, December 18th. I was exceedingly struck by the clever way in which the authors (Butler and Newton of the *Referee*) have travestied the somewhat difficult parts of the sensational novel. I have furnished them with a song which I have guaranteed shall get encores!! Cheeky, eh? Lutz is contributing the music for it. Yesterday I dined with Major Rooke and the officers of the Royal Artillery stationed at Horfield barracks—very jolly. On Friday I take the chair at a smoking concert at the Bristol Arts Club—more agony!”

During the tour Leslie was interviewed by a reporter at Manchester.

Leading actors cannot evade the interviewer if they try, and they rarely try. Leslie, in his travels was many times waylaid and catechised, and the Manchester correspondent gave the following experiences in *The Umpire* on Nov. 21st, 1886:

“It was whilst smoking a cigar after a pleasant little lunch the other day that I proposed to Mr. Leslie that I should jot down a portion of his conversation for the information and edification of the readers of *The Umpire*.

“‘In other words,’ said the comedian, ‘you mean to interview me.’

“‘Well, yes, that *was* the idea,’ I replied.

“Mr. Leslie agreed after a little demur, and, though this particular interview will be to a certain extent without form, it will not, I hope, be void of general interest. Before giving the substance of our chat, however, a few words concerning the principal ‘chatter’ may be desirable.

“Mr. Fred Leslie, although he has attained an extraordinarily

high position in the dramatic profession, and earns the salary of an ambassador, is still quite a young man. He was born thirty-one years ago at Woolwich, within a few hundred yards of where Sims Reeves was born a 'little time before,' as Mr. Leslie jokingly puts it. In appearance I should say he looks just his age, neither more nor less. He is above the medium height, and though slight in build is well proportioned. He has the good fortune to be favoured with a wonderfully expressive face, which involuntarily acts as an index of any passing phase of thought. It is extremely mobile. There is a certain restlessness about the eyebrows which may betoken a certain amount of nervousness. But more probably it is simply force of habit. Mr. Leslie has a prominent chin, which one American critic was kind enough to describe as old-womanish, but when it is remembered that the same writer spoke of his mouth as meaningless it will be seen at once how exaggerated is such a description. Without being what would be called a handsome face, it is manly, frank, and pleasing. There is something peculiarly attractive in it. It may be the geniality which characterises it; it may be its expressiveness. I cannot tell. I can only say it affected me as it affects all who are brought into contact with Mr. Leslie. One votes him at once a good, straight, genial, jovial, clever fellow.

"And now to hark back to our conversation. 'Speaking of interviewing,' commenced Mr. Leslie, 'reminds me that the last time but one I was interviewed was in America. I had been seized with scarlet fever, and had just got to the dangerous stage when the gentleman of the Fourth Estate made his appearance. He was told of the risk he ran, but it is needless to say nothing deters your American interviewer—nor even your English one,' added Mr. Leslie, with a suggestive smile. 'The Yankee scribe regretted I wasn't suffering from small-pox, as the greater the danger the greater the glory. Well, now, how shall we begin?' asked the comedian.

"I suggested that some account as to his going on the stage, his earlier performances and future plans, would make a good start.

" 'Well, the last shall be first,' he replied. 'My plans for the immediate future may be summed up in one word: 'Gaiety.' I have signed a three years' engagement, and shall not be disengaged until 1890. As you have already announced, I go next autumn with Miss Farren to America. With respect to my going on the stage I was urged on to it by the editor of a Woolwich paper. I had been an amateur for some time and had worked very hard; in fact, in this way I obtained the experience which enabled me to dispense with provincial experience.'

" 'Then, unlike some of your craft, you don't speak disparagingly of the efforts of amateurs,' I asked.

" 'On the contrary,' replied Mr. Leslie, 'I am glad to see the efforts and merits of amateurs being more generally recognised. Had it not been for my amateurish efforts I should never have been tempted to try for honours on the professional stage. As a matter of fact I really obtained my first footing on the regular boards under false pretences. I experienced the greatest difficulty in stepping from the rank of amateur to that of professional, from the volunteers to the regulars, so to speak. I tried all round, but could not get an engagement. At last, by pretending I had supported Barry Sullivan in the provinces, and having made out a list of all the 'first old men'—which line of business I elected to play, some of which parts I need hardly add I had never attempted—I was engaged to play 'Col. Hardy' in *Paul Pry* at the Royalty Theatre in 1878, Lionel Brough being the 'Paul Pry.' From the Royalty I went to the Folly (now Toole's), then to the Alhambra, and then went on my first tour. It isn't generally known that I played in *Madame Favart* one Monday night on the occasion of the second visit of the company to the Prince's, Manchester, having to leave after

the performance to rehearse *La Fille du Tambour Major* at the Alhambra. This proved to be one of my greatest successes, and I was immediately engaged for America. Some people say—I don't know why—that I am an American. It doesn't hurt my feelings in the least, for I experienced the greatest kindness over there. Still, as a matter of fact, in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations, I remain English, you know—quite English, you know !'

" 'Before rehearsing some of the pieces in London you have been in the habit, I understand, of going over to Paris to see the originals.'

" 'Yes, that is so ; and that opens up a topic on which I should like to say a word,' replied Mr. Leslie, with considerable animation. 'From what I've seen of acting in Paris, I think it quite time the worn-out fallacy of French acting being superior all round to English acting ought to be buried. And I fancy metropolitan audiences are gradually beginning to share the same opinion. For instance, take the performance of Shiel Barry in *Les Clôches de Corneville*. It was, in every respect, a grand performance. Lately, the French Gaspard has been over at Her Majesty's Theatre, and the general opinion is—well, that his impersonation has fallen short. I remember seeing the great St. Germain play the Baron Chevrial in *Le Roman Parisian*, and I afterwards saw a young English actor in the part. Although St. Germain was a big actor in Paris, this young Englishman's performance was artistically incomparably superior. Looking at it from another point of view, I can't imagine anybody on the French stage—even their Judics and Chaumonts—excelling Miss Farren's performance of *Jack Sheppard*.'

" 'You evidently think very highly of Miss Farren's acting ?'

" 'I regard her as the queen of burlesque,' was Mr. Leslie's brief but convincing reply.

" 'Then with regard to dramatic authorship,' he continued, 'it is refreshing to see English authors are no longer seeking

French materials. They no longer dip their pens in *l'encre Français*. Since *Les Dominoes Roses*—known here as *Pink Dominoes*—we haven't had a single French comedy that comes near Pinero's latest work. Another point I should like to mention,' said Mr. Leslie, 'is the question of actors' "business." Don't you think it a pity that actors cannot copyright original "business"?'

"I signified that sometimes it appeared a little hard to have specially-invented 'business' appropriated, but that I failed to see how it could be prevented without doing considerably more harm, particularly as far as the public is concerned.

"'You see,' said Mr. Leslie, apparently unconvinced, 'an author can copyright his share in the performance, and yet the lines and business that an actor adds, though often going a long way towards making the piece a success, are at the mercy of any one who chooses to use them. As you know, an actor may have more to do with making the fortunes of a piece than the author, and yet he cannot copyright a single gag or wheeze.'

"This question of the relative shares of actor and author naturally led to the question of relative remuneration. 'Artistes' salaries,' said Mr. Leslie, 'are generally spoken of as being too high and likely to cripple managers. But, considering the embellishment necessary on the bald material served out by authors, I think the salaries of actors are only commensurate with the work they do. Since salaries have been high, improvisation, which was so conspicuous among actors, is likely to disappear. When salaries were low it was often impossible for an actor to save on so small an income. Heretofore, the only books to be found in the actor's library were the *Rent Day*, the *Poor Gentleman*, *Tom Pinch*, the *Crushed Tragedian*, and other books depicting impecuniosity. Their places have now been taken by *Fortune's Favourite*, *Money*, *£100,000*, *A Bed of Roses*, *The Sunny Side*, and last, but not least, *The Bank Book*."

In Liverpool he thought that the audiences took his "Jonathan Wild" too literally, because he came in for a share of the gallery condemnation usually reserved for the villain of the play. He was probably mistaken in supposing that this demonstration had any depth, but this is what he wrote :

ROYAL COURT THEATRE, LIVERPOOL,
21 / 10 / '86.

"My dear Shirley,—*Jack Sheppard* continues his depredations among the provincials, and much to their delight. 'Jonathan' is taken too seriously, and his villainy brings forth nightly execrations rather than risible ripples. Business and health first rate. . . .

"Very truly yours,

"FRED LESLIE."

However, the tour ran a brilliant course, and came to its appointed end in time for beginning rehearsals for the next Gaiety burlesque. Having thus a term of comparative leisure, Leslie divided his time between rest and recreation, and found leisure to write the following verses for the *Entr'acte Annual*:

THE ACTOR'S HOLIDAY.

The season is o'er,
A rest is in store,
Farewell to the show for a time ;
Ne'er enter its portals,
Nor share with its mortals
The antic and joke of its mime.

Down far in sweet Lee
 My mother to see,
 I went and inhaled fragrant air ;
 Got so tired next week,
 Up in town like a sneak,
 I witnessed a play called *Mayfair*.

“Come hunting,” said Dick—
 I did. Soon got sick
 Of the cold and the damp and the wind.
 I saw two good meets,
 But e’er between sheets
 I had witnessed a play, *Hoodman Blind*.

I went to a dance.
 Hope none saw that glance
 That I gave the clock during the polka ;
 Deuced slow—Off I go,
 Dashed out in the snow,
 And witnessed the last act of *Falka*.

“Come down to our concert,
 A ‘Smoker’ ’tis called,
 Don’t feel in the least wee bit strange ;”
 I knew but one song,
 I heard it ere long
 From another ! I dashed for *On Change*.

Dear old Pal with a pond
 Said, “Of fishing you’re fond ?”
 (I had practised a little in Germany),
 I ne’er got a bite,
 Set off while ’twas light,
 That evening I much enjoyed *Erminie*.

“Thousand up ?” “Right you are ;”
 “Deuced slow,” “spot I bar.”

“This game’s lasting awfully late !
Bravo ! he’s run out ;”
So can I, and I shout,
“ Drive quick—to the ‘ Court ! ’ *Magistrate.*”

“ Nice game of cards ! ”
“ If you like—or charades ? ”
“ The former preferred—you discard oh ! ”
Such awful bad players,
No takers, no layers.

That evening I saw the *Mikado*.
“ Come down—see my horses ; ”
(His year ’d been all losses) ;
I went, and admired his bays,
But tired of—“ c’up ; ”
“ Steady,” “ allez,” and “ houp,”
Arrived just in time for *Dark Days*.

On cycles a match,
Our goal—Colney Hatch ;
Machine smashed just outside the station
Altho’ nearly slain,
Just caught the next train,
Saw *Olivia* with a relation.

The holiday o’er,
Some work now in store ;
Oh, welcome the show for *all* time !
I could *live* ’neath its portals,
And be to its mortals,
For *ever* their joker and mime.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NEW BURLESQUE

*Praise enough
To fill ambition.*—COWPER.

MONTE CRISTO, JR., was presented for the first time at the Gaiety Theatre on Thursday, December 23rd, 1886. During a long existence it saw several changes in the representation, but the following was the first-night cast :

MONTE CRISTO, JR.

Edmond Dantès, a young sailor	Miss NELLIE FARREN.
Fernand, a fisherman . . .	Miss BILLIE BARLOW.
Mercedes, betrothed to Dantes .	Miss MARION HOOD.
Babette	Miss E. BROUGHTON.
Victorine	Miss SYLVIA GREY.
Nortier, criminal investigator .	Mr. FRED LESLIE.
De Villefort, his son . . .	Mr. E. J. LONNEN.
Danglars, a supercargo . . .	Mr. G. HONEY.
Caderousse, a tailor . . .	Mr. GEO. STONE.
Morel, a shipowner . . .	Mr. W. GUISE.
Old Dantès, Edmond's father .	Mr. A. BALFOUR.
Boy at the Wheel . . .	Mr. CHARLIE ROSS.

From the first night, *Monte Cristo* was an assured success. Leslie had a loose rein given to all his fancies, and the result was a flood of surprises even greater than was met with in *Little*

Jack Sheppard. His reign as leading burlesque actor of London had begun, and no one disputed his rank. *Monte Cristo* was full of smart things,



MR. FRED LESLIE AND MISS NELLIE FARREN—
A DUET IN "MONTE CRISTO"

and the critics, even in the serious papers, acknowledged with one accord that, after all, there was genius even in the acting of burlesque.

Miss Farren, too, was given some splendid opportunities of displaying her unrivalled talents, and she and Leslie, acting together, were seen to perfection, which was hardly the case in the previous production.

In reviewing the play next morning, the *Daily Telegraph* said :

“ Attention was firmly fixed on Miss Nellie Farren and Mr. F. Leslie, who, by sheer force of cleverness, and with the aid of innumerable disguises, carried the play high on their shoulders to victory. When one was tired of singing they both sang together ; they danced in solos and in couples ; they were both at their best and both irresistibly funny. Miss Farren, nerved by an unusually enthusiastic greeting, seemed more



MISS MARION HOOD IN “MONTE CRISTO”

than ever on her metal, and has seldom before shown such force of acting or suggested the power that is in her. Many a time and oft she has tripped about the stage, always with grace, ever with a freshness that no time has dulled ; but we question if many who have studied Miss Farren’s art have ever observed more nerve and intensity than the concluding scene of the first act, when the love-sick ‘Dantès,’ on the eve of his marriage, is arrested by the soldiery and carried off to the dungeon at the Château d’If. If this was not burlesque or extravaganza, it was downright drama. Suddenly the inspiration of the scene

seemed to strike the comic actress, and she played it as seriously and with as much power as if it had been in a melodrama at the Adelphi. Facial expression, intensity, the despair of love, the horror of captivity, were all conveyed on the face of the actress, whose art was here of the most interesting kind.

"Mr. Fred Leslie has seldom been more inventive or readier



MR. F. LESLIE AS A GER-
MAN PEDLAR IN "MONTE
CRISTO"



MR. F. LESLIE AND MISS E.
FARREN AS CONVICTS IN
"MONTE CRISTO"

of resource than in the character of 'Nortier,' the arch-conspirator and sometime companion of 'Dantès.'

"Nothing comes amiss to this ingenious gentleman, who not only does what is set down for him, but invents as he goes on. If an accident happens to his umbrella, he is instantly alert enough to turn it to good account. Every look, every gesture, every movement, are the outcome of a fertile and inventive

brain. Take, for instance, the dance with Miss Farren outside the dungeon cell. It was encored three times, and Mr. Leslie danced it each time in a distinctly different manner, inventing as he went on, carried away by the mere fun of enjoyment—a dangerous trick except to such as are confident that the ‘readiness is all.’ It is impossible to recapitulate all the strong points of this performance, so ingenious in resources, so instinct with genuine comedy; but one of Mr. Leslie’s great successes was a talkative song describing the peculiarities of various popular actors;” and ending with an imitation of himself. With two such artists on the stage, and both seen at their best, it would be unfair to



THE TREASONABLE PAPER—
MR. F. LESLIE IN “MONTE CRISTO”



FRED LESLIE AS A BOAT-
MAN IN “MONTE CRISTO”

class the entertainment in which they appear as a mere burlesque. In Robson’s Olympic burlesques he had but little to do, but he suggested far more than was set down for him. He became an actor, sometimes a great tragic actor, when he was merely playing the fool. Miss Farren and Mr. Leslie are similarly occupied with light and sometimes frivolous fare, but they show comedy of a very high class indeed.”

The *Era* of January 1st had a full notice which contained the following remarks :

"To say that Miss Nellie Farren and Mr. Fred Leslie are the life and soul of the piece would be to sacrifice the most brilliant element in the cast to a stereotyped phrase. We couple them here because they are inseparable on the stage, where they play into each other's hands and prepare each other's points, as only



MARION HOOD AS MERCEDES IN "MONTE CRISTO"

two such artists can. We would at once demur to the conventional commendation accorded by some critics to Miss Farren that she is as good as ever. We, on the contrary, hold her to be better than ever; more lively, more energetic, in better voice—in a word, more Nellie Farrenish than she has ever been. The mighty shout which went up from the whole house when she entered the scene might have been heard at Westminster; and if the pit didn't 'rise' at her, as they did on a memorable occasion at Edmund Kean, that was only because the modern pit, like the modern Thames trout, never rises at anything. Her acting at the climax of the first scene, where 'Dantès' is overwhelmed with horror at the terrible captivity awaiting him, was as thoroughly melodramatic as her popping her head out of the sack to utter some absurdity in

the full face of her apparently unconscious guards was a happy touch of true burlesque. Her topical song, 'Inside,' will go better when smartened up in the course of the performance; but no improvement can be added to her duet with Mr. Leslie in the second act. 'It's no wonder we're rapidly growing so lean, From the grub served up from the prison *cuisine*,' sing this merry pair,

and then dash off into an epileptic breakdown, compared with which the Neapolitan Tarantella would be a measure of funeral



LESLIE, LONNEN, AND NELLIE FARRIN IN "MONTE CRISTO"

stateliness. As for Mr. Leslie, grotesque singing and dancing are among the least of his resources. He takes 'headers' through the walls of 'Dantès' cell as though he were a harlequin

born. His fertility of invention in the details of stage-business is inexhaustible. He cannot throw away a sweetmeat but a crash of the big drum, as it falls, shows how hard it must have



DANTES (MISS NELLIE FARREN) IN CAVE ("MONTE CRISTO")

been for his teeth. If the tip of his umbrella breaks, he turns the accident to comical account. To brighten his narrative of his swim to the Isle of Monte Cristo, he wrings, in an off-hand way, about a bucketful of salt water out of his beard. These things fall flat in description, but they are exquisitely droll on the stage.

"His imitation of his fellow actors is really a triumphant piece of mimicry. He hits off in rapid succession, and each one to the life, Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mr. Toole, Mr. Thorne, Mr. James, Mr. Paulton, Mr. Grossmith, Mr. Lely, Mr. Barrington, Mr. Terry, Mr. Arthur Roberts (this one must be

seen to be believed, as the advertisements say), Miss Farren, and finally—himself."

In his song of imitations he, when sufficiently encored, introduced no fewer than twenty-two separate impersonations of living actors, most of them marvellously true.

About this time the *Saturday Review* had the following article on Leslie's methods :

"To do justice to Mr. Leslie's inventive power is almost as difficult as to measure his comprehensive capacity as an actor. He is an accomplished vocalist, a comedian of original gifts NOIRTIER AND DANTÉS ("MONTE CRISTO") and excellent training, a dancer of infinite sprightliness and grace, daring, masterful, possessed of a singularly keen and nimble intelligence. He overbrims with by-play, exquisitely facile and spontaneous, prodigal in invention, and of incredible audacity. So rapid and resistless is the untiring play of his tricksome fancy, it is a hard matter keeping pace with its fleeting succession. His variety 'business' absolutely defies description, just as his disguises baffle the keenest eye. He will concentrate the attention of the whole house on a single gesture; the point of his umbrella, the capricious play of his moustache, or a mere eye twinkle, imparting to the lightest circumstance of triviality the most incongruous significance and the most surprising



drollery. When he darkens the stage by blowing out the moon at a breath, or when he recalls the light by the daring



NOIRTIER (FRED LESLIE)
(FROM "ALLY SLOPER")

device of a patent-match which leaves quite as much light after it is extinguished, he shows the admirable quality of his fooling. His entrance after an enthusiastic call, when he deftly throws a bouquet at his own feet, is but one of many samples of his ingenious humour. Delightful is the manner of his exit as he opens the missive concealed in the bouquet, glancing with sly apprehension at the contents, as who should say, 'I could an' I would,' and finally retiring in a flush of conscious virtue. His mimicry of Mr. Irving, momentary though it be, is perfect; the stride, the muttered phrase, the oblique pathetic look flashed over the shoulder, under the acute angle of the heavy eyebrow

are simply irresistible. The remaining imitations, dashed off with incredible verve in the breathless course of a topical song, are almost all instantaneously recognised, and some—*e.g.*, Mr. Toole, Mr. Arthur Roberts, Mr. Grossmith, and Mr. Barrington—are brilliant in the extreme. The amazed beholder, rendered thoughtful by so versatile a display, may well marvel that an actor of such rare and sterling parts, a singer so richly gifted by nature, with so excellent a method, should not be provided with a more worthy field of illustration than is afforded by an utterly formless and spiritless burlesque."

Many other criticisms have been written upon Leslie's originality and spontaneous whimsicality, and very many instances might be given. *Monte Cristo* especially contained an abundance of his conceits. He had one trick with a moustache made of black silk. The idea was first suggested by an accident. The moustache was attached to his nostril by a spring clip, but one night the spring got bent and would not act, whereupon Leslie gripped the wire with his teeth, and soon found that its evolutions were diverting the audience. With a little practice he was able to make that moustache go through a short entertainment of its own, changing from side to side, making the circuit of his mouth in most amusing fashion, and finally disappearing apparently down his throat.

From Christmas, 1886, Leslie entered on a three years' engagement with the Gaiety manager, Mr. George Edwardes, at an increasing salary of £50, £55, and £60 a week, and the alliance proved entirely satisfactory on both sides. Being now in a position to settle down, he took a house at New Cross (No. 53, Lewisham High Road) for a term of three years, and was content.

Early in 1887 there were negotiations with a view to his reappearance at his first theatre, that of the Royal Artillery at Woolwich, in conjunc-

tion with the two local clubs, the "Touchstone" and the "Garrison Dramatic." A farce and a



NO. 53, LEWISHAM HIGH ROAD. (SKETCHED BY A NEIGHBOUR)

comedy were suggested, and there was a good deal of local speculation over the event, but cir-

cumstances intervened and the project never reached fruition.

On May 23rd in the same year, Leslie again made an excursion into the realms of comedy, appearing in a selection from Andrew Halliday's *Nicholas Nickleby*, given at a complimentary benefit to Miss Nellie Farren at the Gaiety Theatre on the afternoon of that day. Miss Farren played the poor starveling "Smike;" Mr. Lionel Brough was "Squeers," the schoolmaster; and Fred Leslie was "Nicholas," the new usher at Dotheboys Hall.

The second act only was played and it was cast as follows :

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY.

Nicholas Nickleby . . .	Mr. FRED LESLIE.
Mr. Squeers . . .	Mr. LIONEL BROUGH.
John Brodie . . .	Mr. JOHN BILLINGTON.
Brooker . . .	Mr. E. VIVIAN.
Boy . . .	Mr. ROSS.
Mrs. Squeers . . .	Mrs. H. LEIGH.
Miss Squeers . . .	Miss HARRIET COVENEY.
Tilda Price . . .	Miss CONSTANCE GILCHRIST.
Smike . . .	Miss ELLEN FARREN.

Of this occasion Mr. Lionel Brough says :

"I never can forget Fred Leslie, and if I forget everything else I shall always remember playing 'Squeers' to his 'Nicholas Nickleby' for Nellie Farren's benefit at the Gaiety. Nellie, you remember, was the 'Smike,' in whose defence 'Nicholas' canes the schoolmaster. I talked to Fred about that caning, and suggested a 'stuffed' stick or a birch rod, but Dickens had

written it 'cane,' and so cane it must be. At rehearsal 'Nicholas' complied with my injunction to 'play lightly,' but I have a tender skin, and I felt the cane as I had not felt it for a good many years. However, it did me no harm; beyond the marking there was nothing to complain of, and I did not object to a little suffering in the cause of art. Then came the performance, and Fred was very real all through it. When it came to the flogging, and I was grovelling on the floor, he flew at me, grinding his teeth—I can hear them now—seized my collar and lashed me with all his might. I have been told that my struggles and cries were very natural, and I have no doubt of it, for I was writhing in agony. When I got to my room I found my body covered with wheals, and I went to Fred and showed him my condition. Poor fellow, he was greatly distressed about it, and would have done anything to make amends. He had no idea of hurting me, and thought he must have been carried away by his part. Seeing his abject sorrow, I laughed the matter off, saying that I should soon get well. But I didn't."

Leslie certainly did throw an air of realism over the little drama of school life, and played, we thought, extremely well. Indeed, all the parts being filled by capable exponents, it was a very enjoyable performance (omitting for the moment Mr. Brough's feelings), but there was a curious finish to the schoolroom scene owing to some of the actors, strangers to the Gaiety stage, standing too far forward and not noticing the descent of the front cloth, which shut them out when it should have shut them in. In laughter and confusion they hurried off right and left.

In this same year, 1887, Leslie represented

"The Governor of Tilbury Fort," in the extravaganza of *The Critic*, at a Haymarket matinée on March 27th, and in the following June, which was long prior to the introduction by the French company of "plays without words," he took part at the house of Mr. John Aird in the "Screen scene" from *The School for Scandal*, which was performed entirely in dumb show. The following was the cast :

Charles Surface . . .	Mr. CORNEY GRAIN.
Joseph Surface . . .	Mr. FRED LESLIE.
Sir Peter Teazle . . .	Mr. ARTHUR CECIL.
Lady Teazle . . .	Mr. GEORGE GROSSMITH.
Servant . . .	Mr. DURWARD LELY.
	and
Interlocutor . . .	Mr. RUTLAND BARRINGTON.

The performance, as might be expected of such a selection of artists, was exceedingly clever and droll. The "screen" was of glass, and the behaviour of "Lady Teazle" behind it, though supposed to be invisible to the actors, was displayed for the enjoyment of the audience. The explanations of the "showman," Mr. Barrington, added much to the drollery and novelty of the business, and the apparent inability of the actors to see through the glass screen vastly augmented the fun. While Barrington pictured to the audience in glowing terms the agony which "Lady Teazle" must suffer from the annoyance of "Joseph Surface," the sarcasm of "Charles Surface,"

and the jealousy of "Sir Peter Teazle," "the lady," utterly indifferent to them all, spent her "wait" behind the screen, with her powder puff and mirror, until, just the moment before discovery, she threw herself into the necessary pose. The performance was voted very remarkable, and so pronounced was the encore that it had to be repeated from beginning to end.

Monte Cristo went upon the customary tour at the end of the London season, and did splendid business in all the great towns, as the following letter will show :

"GEORGE HOTEL, GLASGOW,

October 22nd, 1887.

"My dear old Tom Vincent,—Here I am up North, working hard to make Sandy MacPherson laugh. The tour has been and is most successful, and George Edwardes is all smiles in consequence. I believe I am to visit Australia and America next May for a year ; for this George guarantees me £5000 !!

"Touching the act drop : I will see if I can paint one while on tour, doubtless I can have the use of a paint frame at one of the theatres. Please send me dimensions of proscenium. The dear old darling burglars who paid my house a visit did not get off with much. Nothing has since been heard of them or my property. I wish to goodness I could be at home ; I feel sure I could trace the swag. Here the weather is delightful. We play our last cricket match on Friday ; Mills was my guest for a fortnight at Leeds and Scarborough, and made top score on the occasion of a well-balanced match at the latter place against Mr. Topham's side. Miss Farren presented him with a bat and letter of congratulation. He became quite a favourite with the Company, and seemed loth to leave Bohemian life for the

office stool. I spoke to George Edwardes about him, and it is more than likely he will be tried in *Frankenstein*. I have thought out, and the authors have well worked out, an idea for a duet, which ought to go a long way towards making the success of the piece. We are due at 'Sweet Edinbro' town next week. Manchester Exhibition is the grandest show of this kind I have ever seen. The Exhibition, grounds, and picture galleries are something to be remembered. I might say I lived there the week. The switchback was coining money for Captain Bainbridge, the proprietor of the Theatre Royal.

"I remain, thine till the worms',

"FRED LESLIE.

"Miss Farren and company send kindest regards."

The act drop mentioned in the foregoing letter came a month or so later, and was used in the annual Burrage Town Christmas pantomime at Plumstead.

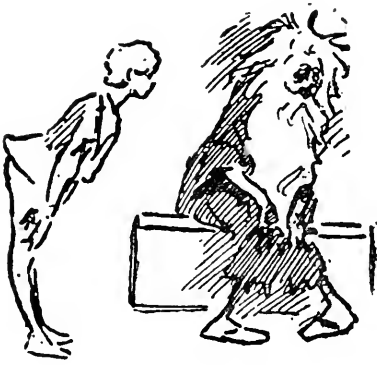
The burglary referred to was committed at Leslie's house in the Lewisham High Road while he was on tour and his family were at Clacton.

CHAPTER XIX

AUTHOR AND ACTOR

Every man can be an author that can write.—GOLDSMITH.

LESLIE'S first essay in burlesque authorship was made in 1887. He had in his earlier years



HE DO CREAK

written several small farces, none of which were ever polished up for presentation, and one of these, after we had completed *Cinder- Ellen*, he entrusted to my hands to finish, his time being much occu-

pied. I have it untouched, for just then his last call came, and his place was void. "*Manœuvring*, a farce in one act" is written for five characters, described as "light comedian," "low comedian," "old man," "juvenile lady," and "soubrette." It contains many witticisms of the Leslian order, but is altogether too imperfect and fragmentary for the stage.

Fred's genius lay in the direction of business

rather than in dialogue, and he found the help of a collaborator an advantage in the preparation of his



MR. FRED STOREY.

first burlesque. This was *Miss Esmeralda*, which was put on at the Gaiety at the opening of the autumn season and announced under the authorship of A. C. Torr and Horace Mills, the first being a perversion of "actor" adopted by Leslie as his



LETTY LIND DANCING

nom de plume, and the second being the name of his young friend Mills, who had already written two or three burlesques for the Royal Artillery Theatre at Woolwich. In a letter dated September 1887, Mr. Mills writes as follows :

"Dear Vincent,—I have just returned from my annual holiday, and where do you think I have been spending it, my boy? With Fred Leslie and the Gaiety Company at Leeds and Scarborough. I had a fine time, especially at Scarborough, where I played for them in a cricket match against



GEO. EDWARDES



E. LONNEN



FRED LESLIE

an eleven of Scarborough. Miss Farren promised a prize bat to the highest scorer, and I was fortunate enough to win it, making 78, the highest score I've ever made. You can imagine how proud I am of my prize bat, and the autograph letter accompanying it. They were all very nice and kind to me, and I was very very sorry to have to leave them. The principals all stayed

at the 'Queen's' hotel at Scarborough—Leslie, Lonnen, Miss Farren, Marion Hood, Sylvia Grey, and F. J. Harris, the acting manager. I returned to town on Sunday with George Edwardes and Charles Harris. On Monday and Tuesday I



was at the Gaiety to attend rehearsals of the chorus of *Esmeralda*. Lonnen and Marion Hood came to town last night. I find office work jolly dull after theatrical life. Leslie has been extremely kind to me, and I really feel quite undeserving of his generosity. I have to thank *you* for my introduction to him, which has resulted in such good fortune to me. I feel that it is a great honour to have collaborated with such a genius as Leslie. Even to *fail* with him is something to be proud of. . . .

“HORACE MILLS.”

Leslie was destined not to appear in his first burlesque at the Gaiety Theatre.

Mr. Lonnen and Miss Hood returned there and introduced *Miss Esmeralda* on October 8th. Although announced as the work of A. C. Torr and Horace Mills, it was pretty generally known that “A. C. Torr” was Mr. Fred Leslie. There was consequently an interest added to the first night's performance of *Miss Esmeralda*, which was fated not only to initiate the new authorship but to establish the second Gaiety company.

Prior to the production of *Miss Esmeralda*, Leslie wrote as follows :

“GRAND THEATRE, LEEDS,
1/9/87.

“My dear Shear,—Business generally has been unusually good, better e'en than with last year's *Jack*. . . . The critics here

regard the individual efforts of the interpreters as much more to their liking than following the close lines of the libretto. The *Frankenstein* idea is to my mind a mistake ; the *show* will be enormous of course, but the supernatural element pervading it will hamper the comedians considerably. Touching *Miss E*, who is to shake her tambo at the old pitch on Saturday, October 1st, Chas. Harris has found it necessary, for the purposes of display, to have the second act entirely re-written, which, you can imagine, has made me and my pard excessively busy and worried. I foresee undeserved accusations of 'no connection' against the poor authors, who cannot, or dare not, explain. . . . We are a very happy family on tour, and, health and voice in my own case being A1, I may fairly say I am enjoying myself, although away from London and its attractions.

"The very modest amount of £200 per week of twelve performances, was offered me by the managers of the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, for next year's pantomime. I think I shall send it to the paragraphist of *The Era* as another instance of the exorbitant *demands* made by actors.

"I am, &c.,

"F. LESLIE."

That he was much absorbed in this his first authorship is also shown by a letter to Mr. Silverthorne, dated Croft House, Brincliffe, Sheffield, 10/10/87, in which he excuses himself for failing to keep an engagement in London, and says :

"I have had a very anxious week, and my sole thought has been for *Esmeralda*, but now that she is successfully launched, let me ask you not to be too hard on one who does nothing wrong intentionally, and will go on his marrow bones and pray forgiveness. Thy thoughtless pal, FRED."

The night came for *Miss Esmeralda's* début, and Fred, to his sorrow, was kept in the north of England, prevented by the success of his tour from coming to town to see the first appearance of his bantling; but we sent him half-hourly telegrams, and when the performance was over he had quite a shower of yellow envelopes containing boundless congratulations. Some of the press notices next day were not couched in terms so felicitous as we desired, but Leslie had begun to grow callous of criticism, and only wrote good-humouredly to say that, "No burlesque could be expected to satisfy the higher cult among the critics, and that the advent of two new authors at the work must appear to the followers of Art in the drama as a fresh outrage." Ever afterwards when he met with an article condemning a new burlesque, he merely remarked that the London writers soared too high and could not bring themselves to the level of the multitude, who would come, nevertheless, to enjoy a good laugh at the Gaiety whatever the wise folks said. One thing he especially rejoiced at was the promotion which *Esmeralda* gave to "a very good boy called Lonnen," and also to the chance which it afforded to another actor in whom he took an interest, the late George Stone. The character of "Claude Frollo, the monk," which was designed for the principal author, was

taken by Mr. Lonnen, who made much of it. The first performance took place on Saturday, October 8th, and the *Daily Telegraph* said that it

“Excited a Gaiety audience to extravagant raptures.”

And further remarked that :

“In two respects *Miss Esmeralda* is very far superior to its predecessors. The music is of a much higher class than we remember before, some of the choruses and finales being quite as good as, if not better than, are found in ambitious comic opera, and in beauty of design and exquisite blending of colour the stage pictures should attract audiences on their own account. . . . Mr. E. J. Lonnen is the Gaiety favourite of the hour. He has youth, activity, and high spirits, and his Irish song, called ‘Killaloe,’ was encored until the singer was fairly exhausted. Clever and quaint, always ready, and with a fund of natural humour, Mr. George Stone, a military and comic Gringoire, made the artistic success of the evening ; and Mr. Leo Stormont, a strong-voiced Clopin, and Mr. Frank Thornton, a humorous Quasimodo, were both very usefully employed. Miss Letty Lind easily carried off the prize for graceful dancing, and was admirably effective in a new and decidedly original ‘Pyramid Ballet,’ in which the dancers, attired in bright scarlet and dazzling white, are supposed to represent billiard balls. Seldom in modern times have burlesque lines been spoken with such point, clearness, and good expression as by Miss Ada Blanche, a very promising actress ; and as a dancer her sister, Miss Addie Blanche, was equally successful. With such an array of talent it was not easy for Miss Marion Hood, exquisitely dressed as Esmeralda, or for Miss Fanny Leslie, with her sympathetic voice and welcome experience, to edge

their way to prominence. They did all that they had to do excellently, and without them the *ensemble* could not have been so admirably maintained. The success of the burlesque was never for a moment in doubt, and, when artists and authors had been called, a shout was raised for Mr. George Edwardes, who deserves great praise for his liberality and good generalship.

The *Standard* said :

“Messrs. ‘A. C. Torr’ and H. Mills are the authors, the first name being understood to disguise the identity of a popular comedian. . . . There can be no mistake about the fact that *Miss Esmeralda* is precisely to the taste of a Gaiety audience. It would not answer any good purpose whatever to discuss the authors’ treatment of their theme. Gringoire is no longer a poet, but a comic corporal. Esmeralda, however, loves Phœbus, and Fleur de Lis is fitfully introduced. Claude Frollo and Quasimodo are open rivals and box each other’s ears. Frollo, remarkable for his extravagantly shaped head and movable tonsure, suddenly proclaims himself an Irishman, in order that he may sing a comic song, and this he does, drawing plentifully on some verses which were popular a good many years ago and satirised the French for calling their fathers ‘*pères*,’ their mothers ‘*mères*,’ and so forth. Topical songs used to be favourite introductions, but the success of a ballad about Ballyhooley in the last burlesque has doubtless induced the actor to return to Ireland for his subject.”

The following résumé of the story as presented on the stage is from the *Morning Post* :

“Although the plot of the latest version of a well-worn story is slight, the dialogue is bright and pointed, and affords ample opportunity for the display of that peculiar eccentricity of humour so much in request at Mr. Edwardes’s theatre.

Esmeralda has her three lovers in the monk Frollo, the hunchback Quasimodo, and the soldier Phœbus. Frollo, in revenge for the rejection of his addresses, contrives to throw suspicion of having murdered Gringoire upon Esmeralda, who is arrested and brought to trial. Quasimodo turns the tables on Frollo by producing Gringoire in robust health, the dagger thrust given by the wily monk not having proved fatal. An adjournment is made to the Jardin de Paris, a sort of mediæval Mabilie, where Phœbus and Esmeralda are united and Frollo is pardoned. The success of the burlesque is mainly due to the acting of Mr. E. J. Lonnen as Claude Frollo. In his hands the monk becomes an extraordinary ecclesiastic, devoted to gymnastic gyrations, Franco-Hibernian songs and amorous adventure, a grotesque figure with highly polished cranium, movable hair, and lissom legs. Alike in dance and song, Mr. Lonnen worked with a will, and while he was on the stage the fun never flagged. Some of his 'business' seems to have been prompted by the spirit of Mr. Leslie, but his great Irish song 'Killaloe' (a near kinsman to 'Ballyhooley') owed its enthusiastic popularity on Saturday night entirely to his own humour."

As the *Monte Cristo* tour approached completion, and there was promised a fortnight's interval after the wind-up at the Grand, Islington, overtures were renewed for a show at Woolwich, but, lo! the business at Islington was so enormous that the interval was annulled, and the Woolwich folk again disappointed. Worse still, poor Fred had another attack of illness, as evidenced by the following letter :

" 53, LEWISHAM HIGH ROAD, NEW CROSS, S.E.,

7th December, 1887.

"Dear Tom,—Home again—done up, voiceless, and altogether out of sorts; couldn't show at the Grand on Monday, tried last night—sad attempt. Must have a rest and a chat with Tommy. Come over and see me to-night if you can. . . . FRED."

He soon recovered his health, and was quite ready to take his part of "The Monster" in *Frankenstein*, which was produced on December 24th, 1887.

CHAPTER XX

FRANKENSTEIN

*Still from the point of joy's delicious springs
Some bitter o'er the flowers its bubbling venom flings.*

BYRON.

THE following was the cast of the new burlesque :

FRANKENSTEIN.

Frankenstein, a German medi- cal student	Miss NELLIE FARREN.
Tartina, his sweetheart	Miss MARION HOOD.
Il Capitano Maraschino	Miss CAMILLE D'ARVILLE.
Mary Ann, a maid of mystery	Miss EMILY CROSS.
Tamburino	Miss SYLVIA GREY.
The Monster, Frankenstein's invention	Mr. FRED LESLIE.
Visconti, a vampire viscount	Mr. E. J. LONNEN.
The Model, a brown study . . .	Mr. G. STONE.
Mondelico, a publican	Mr. CYRIL MAUDE.
Schwank, a page	Mr. FRANK THORNTON.
Dotto	Mr. CHARLIE ROSS.

Frankenstein was the work of the same authors as *Monte Cristo*. It proved, as Leslie had predicted, a risky subject, and it had unquestionably some awkward situations. The spectacle of two favourite comedians stripped apparently to the buff and engaged in a pugilistic encounter was

not pleasant. But, strange to say, the chief misfortune of *Frankenstein* did not arise from any deficiency of its own, but from circumstances



FRED LESLIE AS "MONSTER"

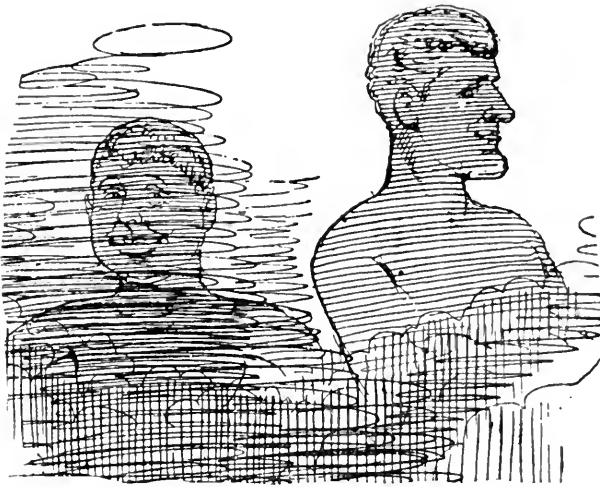
quite apart. The following article from the *Daily Telegraph* of December 26th, 1887, will explain the case and recount a memorable event in the annals of the English stage :

"Hisses on Christmas Eve! Groans and gibes instead of goodwill! Hoots and howling while the church bells were ringing outside, heralding the season when anger ceases! Clamour and cat-calls from a surly and discontented minority when the more generous and loyal majority desired to give old friends and favourites a fair

chance, and to act in a spirit of loyalty towards an ambitious and liberal management. Such a state of things was enough to make the hair of the oldest playgoer stand on end. We never remember to have observed in a theatre at Christmas-time such an exhibition of ill-tempered surliness, such a fit of childish petulance as that which was within an ace of wrecking the fortunes of the new melodramatic

burlesque *Frankenstein*, by Richard Henry, set to music principally by Mr. Meyer Lutz, introducing two artists at least—Mr. F. Leslie and Miss E. Farren—who are unequalled in their particular line of art, and decorated from one end to the other, both as regards scenery and dresses, with a beauty of colour and lavishness of cost surpassing anything of the kind that has ever been seen on a stage dedicated to burlesque.

“Hitherto it has been fairly understood, and has so been acknowledged by a generous public, that a Christmas-Eve



FRED LESLIE AND STONE IN “FRANKENSTEIN”

performance—or, for the matter of that, a Boxing-night production—may be looked upon in the light of an elaborate dress rehearsal. At any rate, the manager has been accorded the benefit of the doubt. On such occasions there must be hitches and *contretemps*; it is impossible that everything can work quite smoothly, rehearse the thing as you will, but the intention has weighed more with a critical Christmas audience than the result. Burlesques on an elaborate scale, and pantomimes prepared in accordance with the modern love of garish display, are often dull, and continually drag when they are first seen. Until they are actually produced it is the most difficult thing in

the world, even for experienced people, to tell what scenes require strengthening, where the fun flags, what dialogue can be omitted, and exactly the place that requires a new song or dance. But when people come to a theatre in an obviously discontented frame of mind, and indulge in an uproar long before the curtain has risen, they actually jeopardise the success they anticipate, they unnerve and distract every one behind the curtain, and they paralyse the performers.

“It was not thus that the predecessors of those who occupy the cheaper seats in a theatre acted towards any manager who had earned their goodwill, and was honourably endeavouring to retain their suffrages. When any portion of the audience had a legitimate grievance against a manager they had it out like men ; they summoned the responsible authority and represented what they had to say by means of a spokesman ; they did not hiss and then simmer down into peace, chewing the cud of their vexation throughout the evening, only to burst out again at the very point and in the very scene that were giving the majority the greatest amount of pleasure. Long before the curtain drew up on Saturday, and before half the people had taken their places, there appeared to be a savage objection to the curtailment of the pit seats. That was a question between the pit and the manager. Had he been called he would most probably have made a courteous explanation, good feeling would have prevailed, and the interests of the majority would not have been sacrificed to the ill-will of the minority, who were inconsistent and illogical enough to keep up a rumbling thunderstorm of discontent throughout the evening, waiting until nearly twelve o'clock to hiss the dancing, to which no objection could possibly be taken, and to treat with scorn and contempt one of the gayest and most elaborate processional ballets that has ever been arranged for the stage.

“If we are asked whether we consider *Frankenstein* a good subject for burlesque treatment, we honestly cannot think that

it is. If the question were put whether this version is particularly funny, it would not, in our opinion, be possible to say that it is. If we were called upon to describe the story or to state the plot, we should shrink from the task even with the aid of the argument printed on the playbills. On the other hand,



FRED LESLIE AND NELLIE FARREN IN "FRANKENSTEIN"

what modern burlesque has, or is ever supposed to have, a plot, or even a dramatic backbone? The 'drama's laws the drama's patrons give,' and—having cheerfully dispensed with connected story in these spectacular burlesques or extravaganzas for a long course of years; having driven the dramatist out of this particular field—it seems a little unreasonable to clamour for a plot

simply because a few extra rows of stalls have been added on Christmas Eve.

“Hitherto they have demanded at the Gaiety something bright and gay—something showy, glittering, and untranslatable; songs, and as many as possible, from Miss Farren, knowing that she will sing and deliver them with an archness, a meaning, and a confidence that keep her still, as she has ever been, the leading spirit of burlesque; humour, ready, quick, smart and electric from Mr. F. Leslie, who has the rare gift of appearing to invent what he says and what he does without reflection and on the spur of the moment; dances from such a tasteful and graceful performer as Miss Sylvia Grey, one of the best and cleverest pupils in the school that will be known in time to come as the Kate Vaughan school; a prima donna who can look well and sing well, as Miss Marion Hood invariably does; an Irish song, delivered with verve by Mr. Lonnen, and written by an Irishman, Mr. Robert Martin; together with a fringe of assistant talent from such clever people as Mr. George Stone, Mr. Frank Thornton, Miss Camille d’Arville, Miss Jenny Rogers, Miss Jenny McNulty, and a very promising little actress, Miss Jenny Rogers. All this the audience had on Saturday night in spite of the plotless and occasionally pointless burlesque.

“Miss Farren never looked better or acted with greater life and spirits. Her first song, ‘It’s a Funny Little Way I’ve got,’ narrowly escaped a triple encore, and her duet with Mr. F. Leslie, called the ‘Five Ages,’ illustrative of life from childhood to old age, was artistic and admirable in the highest degree. Mr. Leslie, who is remarkable for his readiness, was hard put to it to keep the fun going, but his resources never failed him, and he behaved throughout in the most good-tempered and loyal manner; and so did they all. Miss Emily Cross, who really acted remarkably well, was jeered at because no one could understand her character, and both the choristers and the ballet came in for a storm of ridicule when patience was

exhausted. It must have been vexing to Mr. Charles Harris, that the storm broke just as he was disclosing his very best scene. Modelled no doubt on old Drury Lane successes, his superb procession called the 'Review of the Planets' was intended to carry all before it.

"The dresses, designed by Mr. Percy Anderson, are the loveliest costumes of the kind that even the Gaiety has produced. Nor has the scenery by Messrs. Beverley, Banks, Perkins, and Hawes Crayen, ever been equalled on this stage. With such clever performers, with Miss E. Farren on her mettle, arrayed in lovely dresses, with Miss Marion Hood gorgeously and artistically apparelled, with Mr. F. Leslie to suggest the witticisms and invent new business, the fun must, and usually does, come. A general revision of the text and the addition of a few more popular tunes will be of considerable advantage to the success of the play. At any rate, *Frankenstein* is certain to have another chance.

"The occupants of the Gaiety stalls were certainly true to their old and well-tried friends. They rallied round the actors,



THE "SPECIAL" POLICE

singers, and dancers in the new burlesque at a very awkward moment. It was a battle of applause against outside clamour. The louder the gallery bawled the more demonstrative became the hand clapping, and the stalls and boxes fairly carried the day. It was put, and ultimately carried by a narrow majority, that *Frankenstein* should have another chance, and it will get it."

With a launching so unlucky, the new burlesque could scarcely have been expected to make a highly successful voyage, and all the endeavours of the actors and actresses failed to win the prospering gales. It was played for the last time on April 27th, 1888. The trip to Australia and America, which has already been mentioned, was consequently hastened, and Fred had a farewell performance at the Gaiety Theatre on the afternoon of Monday, April 23rd, 1888 (a week after a similar compliment had been paid to Miss Farren). The programme consisted of the farce of *Good for Nothing*, in which Miss Farren, Lionel Brough, J. D. Beveridge, Percy Lyndal, Geo. Stone, and E. Haslam appeared; the fourth act of *The Lady of Lyons* by Mr. Wilson Barrett, Mr. Geo. Barrett, Miss Eastlake, and others; the third act of *Jack Sheppard* with the regular cast, and a miscellaneous selection by Mr. H. Bracy, Mr. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Harry Nicholls, Mrs. Bernard Beere, Miss Florence Dysart, Mr. Geo. Grossmith, Miss Kate Vaughan, Mr. Geo.

Giddens, Mr. E. W. Colman, Miss Sylvia Grey, Mr. E. J. Lonnen, Miss Marion Hood, Miss Letty Lind, and Mr. Arthur Roberts.

On the last night there was a parting ovation, and then the Gaiety Company went forth on its first mission to the Antipodes.

Just at this period Dr. Lennox Browne sent to the *Pall Mall Gazette* the following interesting communication, headed :

“THE TRICKS OF THE THROAT.

“MR. FRED LESLIE’S MIRACLES IN MIMICRY.

“The departure of the members of the long-established Gaiety Theatre Company on a lengthened tour in our colonies and America, will give interest to a short and, as far as possible, non-technical description of the actual method by which one of its most competent members, Mr. Fred Leslie, produces his marvellous imitations. The investigations now to be detailed were made by me in conjunction with my friend and co-worker, Mr. Emil Behnke, so that each separate observation was checked and amplified. Before actually describing the mode in which Mr. Leslie produces his imitations, it is necessary to explain how ordinary vocal tone is produced, and this may best be done by a short quotation from ‘Voice, Song, and Speech,’ written by Mr. Emil Behnke and myself:—‘The vocal ligaments, or, as they are otherwise called, vocal cords, having met, are struck by the air blown against them from below, and, being elastic, they yield, allowing themselves to be forced upwards. A little air is thereby set free, and the pressure from below diminished, in consequence of which the vocal ligaments resume their former position, and even move a little more downwards. The

renewed pressure of the air once more overcomes the resistance of the vocal ligaments, which again recede as another escape of air has taken place, and this process is repeated in rapid and regular succession. We have here two sets of vibrations—primary and secondary; the primary vibrations being those of the vocal ligaments, and the secondary vibrations being those of the column of air passing between the vocal ligaments. The result of these vibrations is *vocal tone*. The tone so produced does not constitute the human voice in its entirety, but merely the original sound of it. All authorities are, however, now agreed that this original sound is the result of the vibrations of the vocal ligaments.’ These primary or laryngeal vocal tones are reinforced by the resonators, that is, by the portion of the larynx above the vocal cords, the upper throat or pharynx, the nose, and the mouth.

“Mr. Leslie’s voice is a light baritone with a compass of two octaves, from G to G. Almost all his imitations are produced on the middle A and the majority of these depend mainly on alteration in the resonators and on variations of the shape of the mouth governing the character of their utterance. Quite independently of merely mimetic reproductions of the tones and gestures of various actors—a gift not peculiar to Mr. Leslie—this artist’s imitations may be described as of three kinds. First those of animals in the well-known song by Farnie called the ‘Language of Love,’ which is founded on a French chansonette, ‘Les Animaux,’ and has been sung by various other actors. The only four sounds that are of special interest in this class are those of the frog, the bull, the turkey-cock, and the chicken. All vocal notes require, as has been shown, an expiratory act, that is to say an upward column of breath from the lungs on to the cords, but the croaking of the frog is imitated by an absolutely contradictory action, the cords being thrown into action by an inward current of air taken from without through the mouth. That of the bull is

done by closing the lips and allowing the whole of the sound, which is of the character known as *portamento*, to escape through the nose. The note of the turkey consists of a series of falsetto tones, with an exceedingly rapid trill at the tip of the tongue and lips. A testimony to the excellence of this imitation is afforded by the fact that on one occasion, when Mr. Leslie was exercising, he was actually driven by the turkey-cocks from the farmyard, jealous of the attraction which the intruding copyist had for the fair ones of their harem. The cluck of the hen is done by rapid labial movements, but the final tone is effected by raising the back of the tongue and lowering the soft palate, so as to force the laryngeal tone through an extremely narrow aperture.

“The next series of imitations altogether original are those contained in the song written by Mr. Leslie, of the love story of two dolls, in which the sounds of numerous toys as heard in the Lowther Arcade are reproduced. They consist of the Punch and Judy, the toy rabbit, the doll which squeaks when pressure is made on its abdomen, and the popgun. With regard to the majority of these there is nothing of novel interest, but the squeak of the doll, which was the prelude to Mr. Leslie’s imitations of the violin, is really something very marvellous, for it is produced by what is known as the small register, a mechanism peculiar to children and women’s voices. The note of the squeak is the high soprano A flat, and is perfectly phenomenal, since it is placed more than three octaves above the lowest limit of Mr. Leslie’s normal singing voice. The noise of the popgun is effected by falsetto *portamento* followed by a loud explosion, which is caused by suction with the tongue.

“Lastly come the imitations of musical instruments as illustrated by Mr. Leslie’s newest song, ‘Love in the Orchestra.’ The musical instruments imitated are the violoncello, the clarinet, the cymbals, and the violin; in this series

may be also included another instrument not exactly orchestral, and portrayed by many other artists, but by few so well as the subject of these remarks—namely, the banjo. The effect of the banjo is produced by exceedingly energetic pressure and forcible explosive opening of the lips, the laryngeal tone being the while conveyed entirely through the nostrils. In the 'cello imitation the vocal tone also passes entirely through the nose while the lips are kept firmly closed. This last fact can be demonstrated by the circumstance that a mirror held against the lips is undimmed, however long the imitation is continued, while, held under the nostrils, it is immediately clouded by the moisture of the expired breath. The clarinet tones are imitated by singing in falsetto from the upper part of the scale downwards; the cymbals, by forcing the tone through the closed teeth with labial explosion.

“Finally, we come to the imitation of the violin, which, as before hinted, is produced by the same mechanism as the squeak of the doll. With the throat mirror the vocal cords can be actually seen producing these tones, and the appearance witnessed may be best described in the actual words used in ‘Voice, Song, and Speech,’ describing the highest register of the voice of a child or woman, when ‘We now come to a last change, which brings us to the highest part of the soprano voice commencing with F sharp which Mr. Curwen has called the “small register,” because the action of the vocal ligaments is confined to a small part of them, and this mechanism consists in the formation of an oral orifice in the front part of the glottis which contracts the more the higher the voice ascends, the vocal ligaments being, in the hinder part, pressed together so tightly that scarcely any trace of a slit remains. No vibrations are here noticeable; while they are, on the contrary, so very marked in the anterior portion as sometimes to blur the outlines of the orifice to a considerable extent.’

“The only difference between this description and what is

seen in Mr. Leslie's larynx is that even in the anterior part of his vocal cords there were no vibrations visible, and the orifice was reduced to a much smaller aperture than that seen in the throat of women. I have only to remark with regard to this tone that it must not for a moment be supposed that it is produced by a falsetto, which is something quite distinct from the 'small register,' and although cases are not rare in which the male can imitate the female voice—in point of fact some notes in the tenor voice are produced by the same mechanism as those of the contralto—this is the first instance I have ever known of an adult male possessing the 'small register,' which, as before stated, is generally considered as peculiar to children and women.

"An important question in conclusion. What effect have these imitations on the natural health? On this point I have to say that I have medically attended on Mr. Leslie for nine or ten years, in fact since he first entered on his professional career. He then told me that he had already been some five years educating himself as an amateur in the mimetic art which he has now brought to such a pitch of perfection, and he reminds me that when I first saw him I threatened him with loss of voice if he continued to play the tricks with his vocal organ which he was just then commencing on the stage. But threatened men live long, and while I am happy to see that my prophecy has not been fulfilled, I have been very interested to account for the fact that such long-continued vocal acrobaticism should have been attended with almost complete impunity to the normal voice. As a warning to those who may wish to emulate Mr. Leslie, it has to be remarked that perfection in these unnatural functional acts is always attained at a certain expense of strength of the organ in normal use. Not only does Mr. Leslie admit a delicacy in this respect, but one has only to call to mind the physique and appearance of ventriloquists and others similarly gifted to appreciate the truth of this verdict."

CHAPTER XXI

AUSTRALIA

*Such wind as scatters young men through the world
To seek their fortunes further than at home.*

TAMING OF THE SHREW. :

THE Gaiety company had a pleasant and uneventful journey to Australia. In a long letter, Leslie described their voyage and reception as follows :



MISS SYLVIA GREY IN
"MISS ESMERALDA"

"PRINCESS'S THEATRE, MELBOURNE,
June 12th, 1888.

"Dear Tom,—After a very pleasant voyage, here we are all safe and sound and feeling like two-year-olds. The ship behaved wonderfully, and the elements were kind ; the *chef* was A1, and the captain a regular Bohemian brick. I believe if he had the power to re-christen his ship he would name her the 'Nellie Farren.' At Gibraltar Capt. Ward, R.A. (the whilom Woolwich athlete) met the ship with a dingey and crew of eight artillerymen dressed in funny amphibious suits—soldier cloth and yellow braid cut in sailor fashion. He gave us a great treat of six hours, showing us every place of interest, including the galleries.

How I longed for you to have shared in a treat just to your taste. Naples came next. I have an indistinct idea that a poet once described this place as 'a city dropped from heaven.' I was in Naples one whole day and night, and felt inclined to go beyond the poet and say heaven itself had dropped there—saving the horseflesh, which looked as though it were fed only on its birthday. Everything else is grand—Vesuvius, the bay, and the cathedrals being worth the journey to see. Being Sunday, of course the races were on, and the contests were most exciting (?). There was a dispute about one race, and the Neapolitans actually clamoured to have it run over again! and, behold, the *toujours la politesse* judge positively acquiesced! and over again went Tomaso Cannoni and Georgeo Fordammi on their crates of catsmeat. My investments in the shops were conducted in strange ways. Where French was not spoken I had to act what I wanted. Needing some corn plasters (for Frollo the monk) I entered the pharmacea and off came my boot and on to the counter my stockinged foot, when, squeezing two toes and giving expression to excruciating agony on my face, with a howl to demonstrate the anguish of tight boots, I found before me the article of my desire. At Port Said met four people who knew me in America and London. Next Aden, and with 'Perkyn Middlewick,' in *Our Boys*, I ejaculated, 'Pheugh !orrid 'ot, haint it?' A wait of five hours enabled us to make up a Gaiety party and visit somebody's wells—Solomon's, I think; not Tunbridge's. The camels plodding away with their far-off looks, and the surrounding scenery, the hot sky dotted here and there with a soaring eagle—the sacred bird—made up a wonderful picture: although I think it is time a Lord Chamberlain was appointed to look after the ladies' costumes. Now came eighteen days without a stoppage, and we had to make our own fun. With an awning overhead and a netting all round the deck, we managed to play cricket every afternoon,

and then there were sports with tilting the bucket, potato and obstacle races, high jumps, &c., all to conclude with a concert, in which, of course, the full strength of the Gaiety Company was requisitioned, vide programme :

“ LIGURIA CONCERT, Tuesday, 5th June, 1888.

P R O G R A M M E .

Part I.

Overture—“ Dorothy ” . . . Mr. G. A. ASHBY ASHBY.
 Song—“ Forget not to Forget ” Miss JESSIE CONSUELO.
 Song THE MARQUIS OF QUEENSBERRY.
 Song—“ The Language of Love ” Miss LETTY LIND.
 Recitation—“ A Report from Below ” Miss SYLVIA GREY.
 Song—“ Oh, Where’s my Girl ? ” . Mr. FRED LESLIE.
 Song—“ It was a Dream ” . . Miss MARION HOOD.
 Song—“ Ballyhooley ” . . Mr. CHARLES DANBY.
 Song—“ Last Night ” . . Miss MAY RUSSELL.
 Song Miss ELLEN FARREN.

Part II.

Overture—“ Chanson Hongroise ” . Miss BANCROFT.
 Song—“ Anita ” . . . Miss MARION HOOD.
 Recitation—“ Her Letter ” . . Miss ROLAND WATTS
 PHILLIPS.
 Song—“ Love in the Lowther ” . Mr. FRED LESLIE.
 Pianoforte Duet—“ Grand Gallopade ” Miss BANCROFT
 and Mr. G. A. ASHBY ASHBY.
 Recitation—“ The Revenge ” . . Captain DIXON.
 Song—“ It’s English, you know ” Mr. CHARLES DANBY.

Captain Dixon will preside.—Popular prices.

The theatre is lighted entirely by electricity. An efficient Policeman will be in attendance. A life-buoy will be in readiness in case of fire. Free list entirely suspended. Carriages may be ordered at 10 p.m.

[Ocean Printing Works.]”

Six nuns, who looked like penwipers, and his reverence the priest, enjoyed all the contributions. Albany was touched in darkness and Adelaide the same, although we were just able to

kiss the ground the next morning and get back to the ship and fidget until we reached Melbourne. Carriages to meet us, no bother with the Customs. Installed in the best hotel, with a carriage and pair at my disposal, I started "doing" Melbourne, commencing, of course, with the theatre at which we were to play in the evening. The theatre is only eighteen months old, and a perfect paradise of a place, the decorations and capacity knocking London right out of form. Of course we have been entertained every day at somebody's house, and I am beginning to fancy myself the Governor. Streets wide; the trams (steel ropes) capital; food bad; meat tough; servants independent; prices high for everything but meat and pines. . . . Your sincere friend, FRED LESLIE.

"P.S.—At Aden I learnt that in consequence of so many suicides among the troops the band was forbidden to play 'Home, sweet home!' At Naples I bought a bunch of beautiful roses quite a foot in diameter for a shilling. At Melbourne the ostlers wear beards and the stables are badly kept."

The *South Australian Advertiser*, from which Leslie enclosed extracts, said:

"The bringing out to Australia of the principals in the famous burlesque company is undoubtedly the greatest theatrical venture ever undertaken in this part of the world. Some idea of the expenses attending the appearance of this company may be formed from the fact that their salaries are paid from the day they leave England, beside their passages, &c., and that the leading comedian, Mr. Fred Leslie, while he is playing, will receive £100 a week—the other members of the company in proportion."

An Adelaide reporter, who boarded the ship at one o'clock in the morning, wrote:

"Although the hour was not opportune, the captain cour-

teously undertook to pilot me to Mr. Leslie's cabin and introduce me to that gentleman. The great comedian, as might naturally be expected, was fast in the arms of Morpheus, and, when aroused and informed of my errand, said he was afraid he should not show to advantage under the circumstances, but would pull himself together and do his best. 'The pieces we bring to Australia,' he said, 'are *Monte Cristo* and *Miss Esmeralda*, the former being by Richard Henry, better known as 'Carados' of the *Referee*, and the latter by Horace Mills and A. C. Torr. I have been ten years engaged in this work. I originally went into comedy, afterwards comic opera, then burlesque, and,' continued Mr. Leslie musingly, 'shall probably come down to Hamlet. However, I don't threaten that. I have been at the Gaiety close on three years, and am going back there at the end of our American season. We play both in Melbourne and Sydney, a season of four months, and then proceed to America, where we play for eight months. Which do I consider my best character? Well, 'Rip,' in Planquette's opera of *Rip Van Winkle*. I played 'Rip' for 300 nights at the Comedy. It is a part which falls to your lot only once in ten years. Planquette's latest opera, *The Old Guard*, has also been a great success, but I don't know if it would have succeeded without Arthur Roberts, who always infuses every character he enacts with astonishing verve and wit. Though we are rival comedians, I am a very great admirer of Mr. Arthur Roberts. If he came to Australia he would be a great draw, for it is much easier for a small man to succeed in comedy than a tall one. We were nearly killed by kindness before we came away. Everybody was asking 'When do you sail?' and I had cards printed with the date of departure, and when anybody asked the usual question I handed a card. We have all been benefited by the rest and the journey.'

"As there was just time after breakfast to run on shore, Miss Farren, Mr. Leslie, and other members of the company

availed themselves of the opportunity. On reaching the pier I welcomed Miss Farren to Australia, and the vivacious little lady, with the superstition of the stage, immediately knelt down and kissed the landing for good luck. She also insisted on the others doing likewise, roars of laughter being created among the bystanders at the spectacle, especially when Mr. Leslie endeavoured to find a clean spot for his performance. The party walked up as far as the hotel, when Miss Farren religiously turned round three times as she planted her foot on Australian soil."

To Mr. Shear, Leslie also sent his impressions of Melbourne. Writing from Menzies' Hotel, August 8th, 1888, he said :

"The race-course, theatre, and trams, are the finest in the world, I should say. The actors from home don't seem to surprise the somewhat critical natives, who do not gush! Anson—clever Anson, is—well, just good enough for them. . . . The Gaiety opening and season are the things that will be remembered here for a long time to come. Dress circle seats have fetched as much as £1 each. Houses have ranged, starting from Monday:—£270, £250, £295, £356, £330, £360!!! *Monte Cristo* and *Miss Esmeralda* were of course severely handled by the press. Our Nellie very soon won their hearts as 'Dantès,' and did wonders with 'Phœbus.' I have had little or no trouble to get on with the press and public, as 'Noirtier' and 'Frollo' are two fat parts, and the latter fits me down to the ground. The public, after the first night, tried to ape the 'were-not-surprised, we've-had-just-as-good-burlesque-actors-before-you-all-came' sort of air; but the irrepressible bursts of laughter, evoked by the efforts of the Co. soon gave their inmost thoughts away, and the result is that now they almost laugh in anticipation of the wheezelets.

'Ballyhooley,' didn't paralyse them, but paved the way for 'Killaloe' which they literally 'gobble up.' The *Monte Cristo* imitation-of-actors song knock'd 'em, much to my surprise. We sail for Sydney Oct. 3rd."

To another of his correspondents, Mr. Shirley, the dramatist, he wrote :

"PRINCESS'S THEATRE, MELBOURNE,
2/7/88.

"My dear Arthur Shirley,—Passage, passengers, and ship A1. Sorry to leave the ship on arrival. Show-box magnificent. *Monte* business simply astonishing. Melbourne people very kind. Servants independent. Everything double London prices, excepting seats in theatres. Clubs poor. Doctors numerous and rich. Auctioneering one of the best paying games. Exhibition not yet open; fine building. Hotels clean but costly. Food bad. Meat tough. Vegetables (brought by Chinamen) poor and in great variety. Horses half groomed. Carriages seldom washed. Climate delightful. When it rains it comes down like John Hollingshead's cyclorama. Trams, worked by concealed wires, splendid, but dangerous. Beverage high in price, but good. Sundays, like Glasgow, slow. John Chinaman a safe wheeze. Dailies and weeklies good and newsy. Dramatic authors not prolific. George Darrel regarded as *the* one. Zoo very interesting. St. Kilda delicious. No tips nor fees. Have you heard the story of the boosy one who upset the salt and poured port wine on it to take out the stain? Farren made a big hit, and Fred the nondescript got 'em in at once. Storey legg'd his way quickly into favour. Arthur, my old pal, excuse this disjointed ramble and write me a long letter.

"Yours very sincerely,

"FRED."

Monte Cristo and *Miss Esmeralda* were played

in turn upon this tour, and *Frankenstein* was forgotten. In the trial scene of *Esmeralda*, the prisoners (Leslie and Miss Farren) personated their own witnesses. The dock or box which they occupied was open to the view of the audience, and the two artists, whenever they called a fresh witness, were seen to drop down, effect a rapid make-up, and reappear each time in a new character. It was a clever and amusing piece of business, and Londoners may regret that it was never seen in the version at the Gaiety.

Sydney was reached in due course, and the following is Leslie's first account of the city :

"SYDNEY THEATRE ROYAL,
October 5th, 1888.

"Dear Tom,—Sydney is a beautiful spot, and its bay is a most perfect back cloth.

"Hospitality great. Lord Carrington a trump. Rinks are at their zenith. Sharks very numerous. Racing a great weakness, amongst the poorer class particularly. Ladies a trifle ahead in looks, and excellent taste displayed in costuming. Trotting horses—half groomed—a great hobby. Streets narrow. Post office arrangements (as in Melbourne) perfect. Bank-buildings exceptionally attractive. Hotels bad, cuisine good, vegetables (thanks to the would-be ostracised John Chinaman) in great variety. Fruit plentiful. Wrong uns infest the place. I heard a good story on Sunday ; I will try and 'paper' it. I miss Louie and the youngsters very much, and the sight of other people's children makes me sad.

"Business here keeps good, but is not so great as at Melbourne.

"I have re-written *Miss E*, and the court scene is now the funniest in the piece.

"We played a cricket match against the R. A. Officers, and licked them ; Colonel Bingham was one of the opposing team. The chief topic of our conversation was, of course, Woolwich. We are to play a return match in a week.

"The triumvirate of managers here, on the last night in Melbourne, presented me with a solid silver flask, with an appropriate inscription thereon, and they stated their willingness to sign an engagement with me to return in two years' time for a season of six months in Comic Opera at £200 a week. Rather tempting—eh? I think I will purchase a plot of land out here, just for a side spec. . . .

"FRED LESLIE."

CHAPTER XXII

AMERICA AGAIN

*I've wandered east, I've wandered west,
Through many a weary way.—MOTHERWELL.*

THE company sailed from Sydney to San Francisco, where they arrived on Oct. 28th. They felt that a mistake had been made in not arranging a few provincial engagements, if only for the purpose of breaking the long railway journey across the continent of America, their first appearance being fixed to take place at the Standard Theatre, New York, on Nov. 12th. However Fred contrived to find good friends in 'Frisco, and in the day or two he had there managed to go about and see all he could, true to his invariable practice of looking out for "wrinkles." In a letter from San Francisco, he said :

" I enclose a Chinese play bill of a performance I was allowed to witness from the stage of the Celestial's show box at 'Frisco. One of the idol-loving mummers, on hearing that I was one of them (minus the idol adoration), said, '*Ah! youey samey as me!!*' "

While at San Francisco, says a writer in one

of the magazines, "Leslie was presented with a bullet of gold. One of the millionaires of the West gave the bullet to Mr. Leslie, and told how that when he, the giver, at the time a comparatively poor man, was prospecting for gold in the early days of the gold fever in California, he came, in a wild, rugged mountain pass, upon a ghastly bleached skeleton, near which was a rusty old revolver. Examining the skeleton closely, the prospector found, amongst the remains, the golden bullet. In explanation, it may be said that, during the period of gold madness, the rough, wild miners not uncommonly realised fortunes in a few weeks or months, and many of them indulged in the most outrageous excesses of extravagance, even going the length of having bullets of solid gold cast for their firearms. The probability is that the dead man had been shot with one of these, or had taken his own life with one. The finder of the bullet discovered near the skeleton the mine which yielded him his great fortune."

If any one had charged Fred with the weakness of superstition, he would have repudiated the idea as preposterous, but there is no doubt that, like most of his profession, he had some indefinite belief in luck. Whether at the Gaiety Theatre or on tour he always displayed in his dressing-room a small image of bronze, and spoke of it as his

"Mascotte," saying that good luck had attended the Gaiety folk ever since the little figure had been in his possession, which was all the time of his connection with the theatre.

The tedium of the seven days' steaming over the Rocky Mountains was abated as far as possible by all the luxuries of the American railroad, and compensated for by some of the most wonderful scenery in the world. The success of the season also made ample amends for the difficulties encountered, the more so because the company's reception was not by any means assured: a section of the American press having some time previously taken umbrage at the failure of a New York company in London, and shouted for vengeance upon the "Gaiety crowd." The American people, however, utterly repudiated so mean and ungenerous a policy, and the visitors were received with irreproachable fairness and judged entirely upon their merits. Two months were spent at New York and Brooklyn, and the only fault to find was that the theatres were too small.

The following letter was written to Mr. Shirley from New York :

"HOTEL MARLBOROUGH, NEW YORK CITY,

24 / 1 / 89.

"My dear Arthur,—Our show is playing to the capacity of every house we enter, including two matinées a week. I have had to make a speech every last night in every town, and faith-

fully promise to return. I could not play yesterday (Wednesday) afternoon in consequence of indisposition, and at the night performance, which I was just able to crawl through, they made me say a few words, and in return they thanked me for turning up under the circumstances. Tour extended to June, but everybody homesick. Mary Anderson and the Gaiety company are doing most of the business in America.

“Sincerely yours,

“FRED LESLIE.”

The company left New York on January 7th, 1889, for Boston, and from there Fred wrote as follows :

“BOSTON, February 9, 1889.

My dear Tom,—Even Boston clamours for more, a very unusual proceeding on the part of this æsthetic city. Brooklyn simply went mad over us, and stood on the bridge at midnight last Saturday for the ostensible purpose of preventing us from leaving their town. Here we are playing to the capacity of the house. I never have heard such receptions, and I am simply spoilt as a comedian, for they hold me up as an example to all the American comedians. A very big banquet is to be tendered me at New York two days before my departure. Goodness knows how I shall get on for a speech, and a good one is sure to be expected from me. *Ruy Blas*, to which I have been devoting an enormous amount of time, is a ‘corker’ and should have a monumental ‘*first night*’ success. This sounds conceited, but the material ought to make it go from start to finish, and I am most anxious to change the old cry of ‘Yes, pretty fair, and sure to work up after a night or two.’ I contend that *R. B.* is a worked-up burlesque *beforehand*, so look out, Tommy, for a *chef d’œuvre* !

“A stay of three hours at Niagara afforded me the opportunity last Sunday week of realising how great Nature can be as

an artist, and the sight of these Falls ought to convert the most pronounced atheist. Unfortunately the other side of the question was manifested after this entertainment, for the train preceding us left the track, and twenty-two people, some of whom I had met at Detroit, were either killed or burnt, and we had to bring on the saved and wounded to Boston. It upset all of us and made us more nervous than a *première*. My health and pocket, my dear old Tom, and my reputation as an actor, have benefited by this rather protracted tour, and I am fearful that I shall have to return later on, which move would be greatly against my will, but would enable me to retire and live in handsome style after only two years more strutting.

"Base-ball has enlisted me as one of its devotees. I am a constant attendant at the games that are being played in the vicinity. I am friendly with most of its exponents, and now include imitations of their styles in my night's work."

Leslie afterwards said of this tour :

"We made great successes, in Philadelphia and Boston more especially. Everywhere we were accorded a most kindly and even generous hearing, and this in spite of the anti-English feeling which undoubtedly exists in the States in regard to such merry-makers as ourselves. The Americans are so clever in burlesque that they are almost inclined to think they ought to have a monopoly of nonsense-making—in their own country at least. We had a not very pleasant experience at New York, where the Standard Theatre had been engaged, and proved by far too small. The house only held £210, and though we filled it every night, we did no more than cover the expenses of the five weeks' season."

Whatever jealousy there may have been, it did not affect in the slightest degree the popularity of Fred Leslie and Nellie Farren, and they were

treated most generously by both press and public and the dramatic profession.

The *New York World* spoke of Fred as,

“Fred Leslie, actor and gentleman,”

and said that :

“The fun-loving people on this side of the Atlantic didn’t know much about him until 1879, when he came to this country and appeared with the Comic Opera Company of Comley and Barton. Later in the season he appeared at the Fifth Avenue Theatre as ‘Charles Favart,’ in the opera of *Mme. Favart*. Leslie’s success was instantaneous, and his reputation was made.”

This was speaking of the time when Leslie had not been “discovered” in his own country.

Manager Mart Hanley, of Harrigan’s Theatre, was of opinion that the reason of Fred’s popularity was his having none of the affectations of the ordinary London actor.

“He was just a plain, quiet gentleman,” said Mr. Hanley, “whom everybody loved and respected. He was kind and gentle, and was always the first to respond when an appeal for help was made.”

Rudolph Aronson said :

“Leslie was the cleanest cut, the most refined, and by far the best comedian I ever saw. There was no man in the world who could be compared to him.”

A New York paper tells us that :

“Fred Leslie is the only English actor ever offered as much as \$600 a week to stay in America—and refused it. At the

farewell to the Gaiety Burlesquers at the Standard Theatre, the last words of Fred Leslie's speech before the curtain were : ' I will not endeavour to assume any tones of emotion. We have enough salt water before us in our coming voyage across the Atlantic. It is always sad to say farewell. We hope you will never forget us. I know we shall never forget you.' "

An American writer, Mr. Chas. Belmont Davis, remarks :

"All the good fairies gathered at Fred's birth and gave something. They gave him good looks and gentleness of manner, they gave him the broad shoulders of an athlete and the exquisite lightness and grace of a woman, a voice full of feeling and pathos at times, and with it the power to mimic the voice of any other man or woman, or the singing of birds, or the tuning of a violin, and to all of these lesser things they added a quick intelligence, and a wonderful sense of humour, or of the ridiculous rather, and absolute ease and self-confidence, one of the most attractive of men to both men and women that have appeared upon the stage for the last twenty years.

"Until the Gaiety company visited this country, burlesque was practically unknown to the younger generation of theatre-goers. They had been made to believe that extravaganzas and farce-comedies were burlesques, which are about as much like the real art of burlesque as the tank-drama is to the comedies of Bisson. A burlesque, in the English sense of the word, is a play which ridicules those things which we take most seriously—which tears down an illusion, and makes us laugh where we have been taught to cry. Fred Leslie was a great burlesque actor because it was only the humorous side of life which seemed to appeal to him. The dark cloud was well enough for the rest of the world; his standpoint seemed to have been focussed on the silver lining. He went through his career kicking the world as a football before him. The world and its

people were but playthings to him, and from them he took much pleasure, but he gave them good measure in return. Beyond the fact of being a gentleman, he had no regard for the ordinary *convenances* of society, and he has been known to rehearse a new song, in which imitations of various animals were introduced, while strolling arm in arm with a friend down Broadway.

“Next to the ordinary passions to which his audience were heirs, Leslie enjoyed nothing so much as burlesquing the traditions of his own art. Every one knows that somewhere in the left wing there stands a prompter with a book of the play, but Leslie made the prompter a very real person by asking him for his cues and suggestions. Leslie made his audience know in one way or another that thunder was a piece of sheet-iron, and that rain was made by dried pease being rolled up and down an oblong box. It was his delight to address authoritatively from the stage the gentleman in the flies who manipulates the sun and moon, and in the last play in which he appeared he spoiled a very dramatic curtain by offering to leave it to the audience if the man who had charge of the falling snow was not showing animus by throwing it in lumps at him, while he let it fall in white paper flakes over the heroine.

“There is only one kind of flattery of genius which is more sincere than imitation, and that is the flattery which acknowledges genius and does not dare to imitate, as no writer since Shakespeare’s time has attempted to describe, the seven ages of man. Fred Leslie was not quick at repartee, and although the most creative of our comedians, he did not think or act on his thoughts quickly. When an idea came to him he took it home and cut it and polished it, and after much thought and rehearsal produced it. It may have been to play upon a harp with reed strings, or it may have been an imitation of a man going down a spiral staircase, but whatever it was it could be done no better, and that was, after all, Leslie’s surest copyright.

"When Lonnen came to this country, a year after Leslie had played in burlesque here, the dramatic critics naturally compared the work of the two men. To this adverse criticism Lonnen said, in his own defence, 'It isn't fair to compare me or any other man to Leslie; he's not an actor—he's a wonder.' He was a wonder; for no man of the London stage of to-day, with the exception, perhaps, of Mr. Irving, has held a place of such generous esteem, either at his home, or in his club, or on the stage, as Fred Leslie."

While the Gaiety folks were in America, a professor of character-analysis made the following study of their handwriting:

"Who can claim to truly know them as they are? Who can pretend to distinguish between their nature and their acting?"

"We must study them in their unguarded moments, and by means that cannot be influenced by the tricks or paint of the stage—by their most personal evidence, furnished by themselves, involuntarily, without prejudice, and without hope or expectation to benefit or suffer thereby.

"There is Nellie Farren, for instance, or Ellen, as she signs herself.

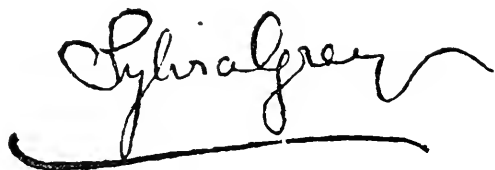
A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ellen Farren". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent flourish at the end of the word "Farren".

"Let us apply to this signature the method of the French to judge of one's peculiarities from his or her handwriting.

"The stroke through the F shows her capacity for a commanding position, which she so well displays in the rôles she has essayed, as this stroke indicates decision.

"The sharp corners at the base of most of the letters show a hasty and quick temper, and would also suggest egotism if the


roundness in the l's did not mean plentiful benevolence and a kind, forgiving spirit. The dash or prolonged tail to the final n makes her decisive character again evident, while the artistic ensemble of the signature indicates the lady's delicacy and her fondness for jewellery.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sylvia Grey". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background. It features a prominent capital 'S' and a capital 'G'. A long, horizontal dash or tail extends from the end of the signature, underlining the name.

"Sylvia Grey, the graceful !

"The broad, open inlet to the capital S and the G and the remarkable form and terminal to the y are indications of an amiable character, a roaming tendency in thought, and a romantic spirit generally. There is also benevolence in the rotundity of her letters, and an evidence of social disposition. The scroll or dash beneath her signature bears proof that the young lady recognises her own worth.

"In fact, she is a pert little flirt, fond of the boys, flowers, and jewellery. The writer has no wish to be uncomplimentary, but he must repeat that which the signature whispers.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frederick Leslie". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background. It features a prominent capital 'F' and a capital 'L'. A long, horizontal dash or tail extends from the end of the signature, underlining the name.

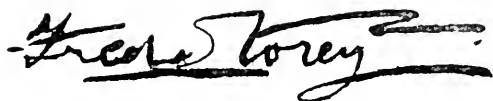
"The dignity of this signature almost forbids the familiar Fred to which we are accustomed.

"The writing in its straight up-and-down treatment and the heavy lines show strength of character and much energy. The straight, slanting dash beneath the name, terminating as it does in a diminutive blot, shows a disposition to have his own way and a proud individuality, which is still more strongly emphasised by the unusual dot after the name.

"The abruptness of the strokes shows the talent for a good financier and perhaps a dangerous man to meet in Wall Street.

"The originality of the F and L comes from an inventive mind, and the harmonious shapeliness of the letters comes from inherent good taste.

"While this reading does not present Mr. Leslie to us precisely as we see him on the stage, the autograph of Fred Storey presents him to us just as he is.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred Storey". The signature is bold and expressive, with a prominent zig-zag pattern in the underlines.

"The extravagant Morel, of *Monte Cristo, Jr.*, who ties his legs in a knot and twists his neck down on his shoulders, to make his jump over Letty Lind more effective, who dances as gracefully on one leg as on two, and whose toes are often seen ten feet apart flattened out against the floor, is there in all his eccentricities.

"The positive uniqueness of the writing shows a freedom from conventionalities and a breadth of idea that might have made Mr. Storey a competitor of Verestchagin had he given his life to painting, as the artistic effect of the two names leads us to think he could have done with some decided success.

"The prominent zig-zag shows a highly developed, nervous energy, an extravagance of conception and wasted energy. He underlines with the same boldness and vigour that makes him famous as a high kicker.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Miss Lind". The signature is elegant and fluid, with a prominent zig-zag pattern in the underlines.

likes to follow the higher walks of musical art; her aria selections in the musically least ambitious extravaganzas are of

the most elaborate character, and so is her signature, for the little hand penning it, of abnormal size. Her flowery treatment of the M and H exhibits a love for the beautiful, and this love takes smiling shape when baskets of odorous flowers are handed to her over the footlights.

"The large loop connecting the H with its following o reveals a family affection. She is herself an authority for her love of children and flowers.

"Another flower-loving girl, who expresses her preferences in her chirography, is

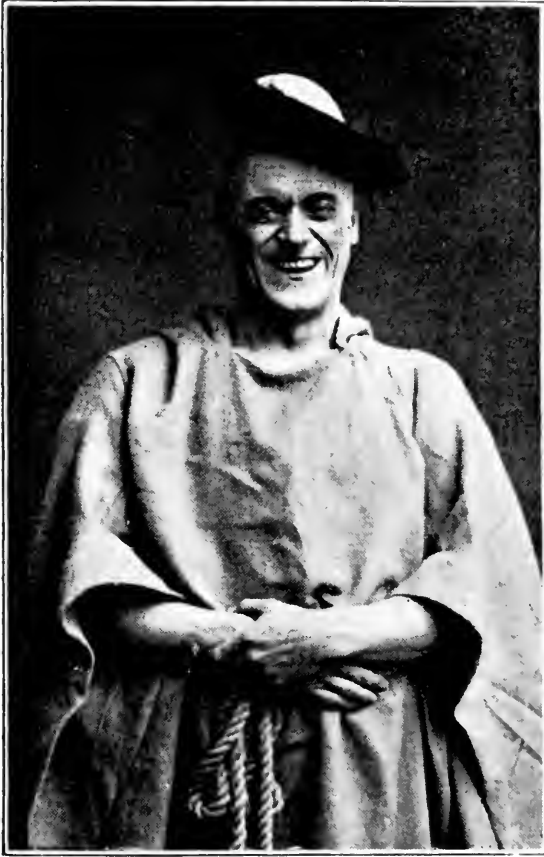
A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Estly Lind". The signature is written in dark ink on a light background. It features a large, sweeping loop that connects the end of the word "Lind" back to the beginning of the word "Estly". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'E' and 'L'.

the young English dancer, who has shown the possibilities in the theatric effect of black underclothes by combining them with a yellow overskirt.

"The form of the long and tall L's indicates pride and self-appreciation, although the drooping tail to the letter displays lack of force in the character. The tall t's denote ambition and good taste. The uncertain dotting of the i shows unconscious disregard for accuracy. The signature is suggestive of refinement and artistic feeling in the delicacy of the touch."

On the subject of Leslie's handwriting I may allude to a circumstance upon which he has often remarked, and many others have made the like observation. I refer to the gradual and unconscious imitation of each other's style by two friends in long and constant correspondence. Fred used to say facetiously that I had stolen his

handwriting, and it was my belief that he had remodelled his upon mine. Probably each was true in part, and, whatever the cause may have been, it is certain that our penmanship grew in



FRED LESLIE AS FROLO THE MONK
("MISS ESMERALDA")

the course of years into a close resemblance. He had a theory which he picked up from some other philosopher as to the natural law which assimilates associated creatures, pointing out in a cattle market the strange resemblance between

the different kinds of animals and their respective drovers. He could cite instances also of a certain likeness between long married couples, and he thought everybody must have noticed cases of similarity between a man and his dog. In like manner he supposed that our pencraft had grown each into the other's features.

The American tour included, in addition to the months at New York, Brooklyn, and Boston, two weeks at Philadelphia, two weeks at Chicago, and one week each at Washington and Cincinnati. Returning to New York in March, the Gaiety visitors found their popularity unabated, and Fred wrote to Shear on March 21st :

"We have been (and it seems are likely to be) playing to the biggest business except Anderson's over here, and although the press at first tried to knock us out, it did not succeed, and the result (although not to please me) is that we shall continue to present *Miss Esmeralda* every night, and matinées on every Wednesday and Saturday until June. Stetson of Boston offers me a guarantee of £200 a week to star me whenever I like to come back. Aronson offers me £160 for a two-years' engagement, so altogether I have not lost much ground by this visit. *Ruy Blas*, the new burlesque, with which I have been so busy, bids fair to make a colossal hit, the parts of 'Ruy Blas' and 'Don Cæsar de Bazan' falling to Miss Farren and myself, and as we are constantly together right through the two acts (I think two are preferable to making it in three) we ought to make some fun."

On completing the American tour, the Gaiety company bade adieu to a host of good friends and

sailed for England. At Liverpool they were met by Mr. George Edwardes and a few others, and the long-severed friends had a delightful luncheon together—Miss Nellie Farren, Miss Marion Hood, Miss Sylvia Grey, Miss Letty Lind, Mr. Fred Leslie, Mr. and Mrs. Lonnen, and a few more. Riding up to London in the Pullman, Fred was full of anecdotes and narratives, but we were sorry to hear that he had symptoms of another illness, an illness which subsequently kept him prisoner for several weeks at a nursing establishment near Harley Street and necessitated a later period of convalescence at Margate.

On the subject of the Australio-American tour Miss Nellie Farren on her return home, had a chat with a representative of the *Sunday Times*, to whom she said :

““We had a jolly time going out to Australia, and went in for all kinds of amusements to pass the time. Cricket—we played cricket, my boy, but I don’t think any of us showed much prowess with the bat, though Mrs. Charles Danby developed great skill as a bowler. Oh, I’m very fond of cricket. Saw a lot of it in Australia. You should see the Bonnor girls play—sisters of Bonnor, the famous cricketer—such fine girls, and splendid cricketers. But on board ship we did all kinds of things to amuse ourselves—including a concert, of course. We stayed a day and a half at Naples, and that *was* a treat. There were some pony races going on, and we all drove out to them in swell style, as if we were going to Epsom ; but had to return ignominiously, for there was a dispute about one of the races, and the judge adjourned the

meeting then and there, a proceeding that amused us very much. Port Said impressed me awfully. I shall never forget a living picture I saw there. Some Arabs, in red and white, with a camel, coming through a white archway. Oh, if I had only been a painter! I shouted to the others to come and look. "Did you ever see anything like that?" I get quite excited over picturesque scenes, you know. We were all good sailors, except Sylvia Grey for a few days. Marion Hood was as jolly as a sandboy when she had been on board two minutes. The people going out with us were very nice, and we all got very chummy. For three weeks we saw no land, and during the last week we got, perhaps, a little cranky with each other—which was to be expected—but the moment we sighted land every one was in good and amicable spirits again. I read a good deal, for some kind anonymous friends had sent a large parcel of books down to the ship for me. By the way, I must tell you, we had five nuns on board, going out to a convent right away in Queensland. They were very jolly, and we got quite friendly. They used to love to hear the boys singing comic songs. One day a funny incident happened. They were all five sitting on deck, and the sea was rough. They were advised to move their chairs, but thought they were all right. Presently a wave washed over the deck and turned them right over, the chairs bowing as if to apologise. Fred Leslie and the other boys, instead of running to their assistance, could only stand and laugh, while the nuns themselves lay helplessly in a pool of water, also convulsed with laughter. It was very ludicrous.'

"'You were glad to get to Melbourne?'

"'Yes, and a splendid reception we had. The Australians are wonderfully hearty, and, of course, quite English. They gave us a very warm welcome, and we had not been on the stage four minutes before we were all favourites. The Princess's Theatre is one of the finest in the world, with every

imaginable convenience. One feels at home at once in Melbourne. When I first arrived I was walking down the principal street, and first I was hailed by Willie Elton from the top of a car, then I met Ted Royce and pretty Lilly Gillmore, and several other London actors and actresses. I said, "I can't stand this, you know; I didn't come all this way to find myself in the Strand. I shall go home." Royce and Elton are great favourites over there, and doing well. Royce is now playing comedy with Williamson, Garner, and Musgrove. I played Nan in *Good for Nothing* for his benefit, and the house was packed.'

"'And how were you treated socially?'

"'Splendidly. They never seemed to think they could do enough for us. We had a constant stream of invitations to go here, there, and everywhere. They were all so kind.'

"'And those stories about the extravagances of the Melbourne "Mashers?"'

"'All false. Of course there were lots of flowers sent to all of us, and a great many people used to come to the theatre night after night, but that was all. The management gave us pretty souvenirs when we left, and the workmen at the theatre presented me with an album containing portraits of myself in my various dresses in *Monte Cristo, Jr.*, and *Esmeralda*.'

"'How did you like Sydney?'

"'Immensely. It is a beautiful place, and the harbour is quite a dream. I shall never forget my first impression of it. Of course you heard of the enthusiastic farewell scene at Sydney. The public chartered two large steamers to accompany ours out of the harbour. We all got very excited, and when I threw my hat to the people on shore it was torn into little pieces, which were kept as souvenirs.'

"'Did you visit Adelaide?'

"'Only for a very short time, unfortunately. We did not play there, though they had prepared a kindly welcome for us ;

but we couldn't stay. From Australia we had a month's voyage to America, stopping on the way at Honolulu, where we landed and spent nearly a day. This was delightful. The scenery, the native costumes, were all so new and picturesque. There was a national *fête* going on when we arrived, and we heard the natives singing their anthem. The tune sounded familiar, and we recognised the air of "He wore a penny flower in his coat, la di da," as a Honolulu anthem. I mentioned this to the conductor, an Englishman, and he begged me not to betray him. We were much amused. At Honolulu we were tempted to take a long drive, and consequently nearly missed the steamer. It was a narrow shave.'

"'You went from there to San Francisco, then?'

"'Yes; and, foolishly, no arrangements had been made for us to play there; but we went straight away to New York. A whole week in the train, awfully tedious, going half a day without a single stoppage, and little variety in the scenery, passing leagues and leagues of brush, with an occasional ranch; and the railway lines so badly set down that we were every now and then jolted in our seats by the train seemingly leaping the gaps. We *were* glad when that week was over.'

"'And how did you like New York?'

"'Very much. We had a fortnight there for rehearsals before we opened, and during that time I went everywhere and saw everything that was to be seen—every theatre—every dime museum—all the shows, in fact. It is a wonderful city; the shops are splendid, though fearfully expensive. I like the Americans, and we got into a very nice set. When they like you, they are very warm and genial—though an American audience is never quite as demonstrative as an English or Australian one. At first we had to face the opposition against English actors that Mr. Laurence Barrett was then agitating, but the public took to us almost immediately, and the theatre was packed every night to its utmost capacity.'

“‘Where were you best received in America?’

“‘Well, Boston is the most English place, and the Bostonians gave us the warmest welcome. But they treated us well also in Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, and other places “on the road,” and our return visit to New York was a triumph. Our farewell there was almost as enthusiastic as it was when we left the Gaiety.’

“‘Did you see Niagara, Miss Farren?’

“‘*Did* I see Niagara? Do you think I would have missed such a sight as that? Talk of scenery! Well there, it’s just grand—and the noise! How can any one be disappointed with Niagara? What more can they want? Why it was almost as deafening as the cheers they gave me at the Gaiety the other night.’

“‘Do you remember how nervous you were about your Australian and American appearances? After your triumphs I should think you would never be nervous again.’

“‘Shan’t I! Why, I am as nervous every first night as if I had never been on the stage before. I never sleep the night before the production of a new piece, or eat anything for twenty-four hours; and I am so restless, if I walk one mile during the day I walk twenty. I have never got over my nervousness. I know how kind and generous the public are, but I always fancy they expect more than I can do, and I am so afraid of disappointing them.’”

CHAPTER XXIII

RUY BLAS

Golden opinions from all sorts of people.—MACBETH.

WHILE at Margate Fred made considerable additions to the embryo burlesque of *Ruy Blas*.

His song of "Stick to the whisky you're used to," which he sang in this burlesque, attired half Scotch and half Irish, he wrote while in bed and suffering acute pain. It recounted the adventures of one Pat and one Sandy, who, when out for a holiday, exchanged their return tickets, and, in consequence, made a series of national blunders, including a mixing of whiskies. Hence the moral.

From Margate, much improved, he transported himself to the Hôtel Métropole in order to be near headquarters, and made such rapid progress that he was quite restored in time to take his allotted share in the new piece.

Mr. Herbert Clark, part author of *Ruy Blas*, says :

"In talking with Leslie at the Green Room Club one day during our collaboration, he said, 'Clark, I shall never get a

pennyworth of reputation out of this burlesque, for, being an actor, no one will give me credit for having written a line of it.' This remark has always made me anxious to correct assertions ascribing the entire authorship to myself. As a matter of fact, fully half, perhaps more, of this burlesque was written by Fred Leslie. In the first place he suggested the subject, saying in a letter which I have :

" 'You must think that Leslie has had his 'write' hand amputated. Dear, dear! I have wasted time and ought to have been at work on our burlesque. Now I am determined to go in a pelter. Firstly, I suggest 'Ruy Blas': give me your idea of a scenario, and in the meantime I will send you mine. Two acts; love interest very strong between 'Ruy' and the Queen. A strong link of love is the essential feature of a burlesque book. I should play 'Don Cæsar.' I have some magnificent ideas for fun.'

"Most of the collaboration was done by correspondence while Leslie was in America in 1889. The following are a few extracts from his letters upon the subject :

" 'HOTEL MARLBOROUGH, BROADWAY, NEW YORK,
January 10, 1889.

" 'Dear Clark,—I think our burlesque would be funnier and easier to work out if not in verse. You may remember *The Forty Thieves* was in prose and attained the longest run at the Gaiety. Here's a song I have written for one of the characters (I don't care which), and I shall be sending scraps constantly.

" 'Yours,

" 'FRED LESLIE.'

" 'HOTEL MARLBOROUGH, NEW YORK,
February 25, 1889.

" 'My dear Clark,—I am glad you have started on 'R. B.' If it should be not accepted, it will be marketable later on. . . . I enclose some more funniments. I return early in

June, when we can possibly put finishing touches to our three-thousand-miles-apart collaboration.

“ ‘ Regards,

“ ‘ F. LESLIE.’

“ ‘ STANDARD THEATRE, NEW YORK,
March 21, 1889.

“ ‘ My dear Clark,—The lyrics must be pushed on with sooner than anything else, as they will necessarily have to be submitted to Mr. Edwardes, and then distributed amongst various composers for music. See that ‘ Ruy Blas ’ is the most important part in the piece. You cannot overdo this, as Miss Farren is expecting a great deal, and she must not be disappointed. It is imperative that she shall shine far and above any one else, in consequence of the interest connected with her return to her old home. The first-class misdemeanor idea I mean to stick to. More matter will be forwarded in a day or two.

“ ‘ Yours sincerely,

“ ‘ FRED LESLIE.’

“ We put the ‘ finishing touches ’ on the burlesque ” (adds Mr. Clark) “ at the Cliftonville Hotel, Margate, where Leslie lay prostrate with a severe and painful illness, yet working hard all the time. His faithful valet, George Conway, one of the best fellows that ever breathed, can testify this. If there was any merit in *Ruy Blas*, it was Fred Leslie’s. And the burlesque will be best remembered by his clever work and artistic acting, together with the delightful impersonation of the title rôle by Miss Nellie Farren.”

The burlesque of *Ruy Blas and the Blasé Roué*, was described as having been written by “ A. C. Torr,” in conjunction with Mr. Herbert F. Clark (with whom Leslie entered into partnership for

the occasion in consequence of receiving from him a letter suggesting some business tricks).



FRED LESLIE AS DON CÆSAR IN "RUY BLAS"

The burlesque had a preliminary fortnight at Birmingham, and was put upon the Gaiety stage on Saturday, 21st of September, 1889, with the following cast :

RUY BLAS AND THE BLASÉ ROUE.

Ruy Blas	Miss NELLIE FARREN.
Don Cæsar de Bazan	Mr. FRED LESLIE.
Queen of Spain	Miss MARION HOOD.
Donna Elto	Miss LETTY LIND.
Donna Christina	Miss SYLVIA GREY.
Duchess Agio Uncertanti	Miss LINDA VERNER.
Trumpeter	Miss BLANCHE MASSEY.
Officer	Miss ALICE YOUNG.
Don Salluste	Mr. CHAS. DANBY.
Major Domo	Mr. BEN NATHAN.
Court Physician	Mr. FRED STOREY.

The production of *Ruy Blas* will be memorable by reason of a remarkable demonstration, thus described in the *Globe* :

“Saturday last is sure to be a red-letter day in the history of the Gaiety Theatre, which was then the scene of a popular demonstration such as, we should say, has hardly ever, if ever, been paralleled. The occasion was the return to London, after eighteen months’ absence in Australia and America, of the dramatic contingent headed by Miss Nellie Farren and Mr. Fred Leslie, and including Miss Marion Hood, Miss Letty Lind, Miss Sylvia Grey, Mr. Fred Storey, and Mr. Charles Danby. It had been prophesied that opportunity would be taken to give an exceptional greeting to these popular favourites, and the prophecy was fulfilled. Not only was the theatre crowded in every part—among those present during the evening being Miss Florence St. John, Mrs. Bernard Beere, Mr.

Augustus Harris, Mr. H. J. Leslie, Mr. Henry Bruce and others—but it was occupied by an audience whose enthusiasm proved to be phenomenal. It is not too much to say that the first half-hour after the rising of the curtain on *Ruy Blas*, or the *Blasé Roue* was mainly devoted to the work—evidently regarded as a pleasure and a privilege—of bidding welcome, in the most uproarious manner, to the artists above noted. Mr.

Danby came first, then Miss Grey, and then Miss Hood, and it seemed as if the repeated salvos of applause which saluted the last-named, who looked radiant in a very charming costume as the Queen of Spain, could not well be equalled either in length or in loudness. Yet when Miss Farren appeared in a very 'fetching' suit as the love-lorn lacquey, 'Ruy Blas,' the reception which had been accorded to Miss Hood was



MISS NELLIE FARRIN IN "RUY BLAS"
("ALLY SLOPER")

surpassed, at any rate in vehemence of expression. There was round after round of cheering, and at length, from the railing round the gallery, there was hung out an elaborate 'streamer,' bearing the impressive legend—'The Boys welcome their Nelly.' Mr. Leslie, on appearing, was saluted hardly less warmly, 'For he's a jolly good fellow' being sung by pit and gallery in multitudinous keys, but with unmistakable earnestness; Miss Lind and Mr. Storey afterwards coming in for flattering testimonies to the regard in which they are held by the Gaiety's patrons.

"The objects of all this agreeable excitement might well

have been pardoned if they had felt overcome by it, not only at the time, but afterwards. It had, however, the effect only of imparting to their efforts an added *verve* and an increased *entrain*. Never before, probably, had they striven quite so hard as they did on Saturday to deserve the appreciation of their admirers. Until all of them had been seen and duly



RUY BLAS AND DON CÆSAR (MISS FARREN
AND MR. LESLIE) ("ALLY SLOPER")

distinguished, the action of the piece was constantly arrested; but after that, all went swimmingly. . . .

Ruy Blas at the Gaiety makes virtually no attempt to burlesque the famous play by Victor Hugo, but it is one prolonged succession of travesties in detail. The high-falutin' drama as exemplified in *The Lady of Lyons*, the music hall 'song and dance,' sentimental art as in Mr. Frith's 'So Clean,' and realistic art as in 'You Dirty Boy!' the woes of the 'first-class misdemeanants,' the 'lady whistler,' such popular

actors as Mr. Irving, Mr. Wilson Barrett, Mr. Toole, and Mr. Arthur Roberts, and 'cruellest wrong of all,' the recent Gaiety *pas de quatre*—all of these are subjected to clever caricature, and with mirth-provoking results. In all the best situations Mr. Leslie and Miss Farren are first and foremost, and, in truth, there are no bounds to the latter's sprightliness or to the former's humorous invention. They

sing, dance, and concoct 'business' in delightful profusion. . . . "

The *Daily Telegraph* had a graceful and complimentary article on the subject, but could not agree with all Mr. Leslie's methods :

"No one would desire to draw the line through much of Miss Farren's 'Ruy Blas' or Mr. Leslie's tattered and torn 'Don Cæsar.' We could not spare Miss Farren's Arab song or Mr. Leslie's exquisitely whistled melody—the endless vivacity of the one or the exhaustless ingenuity of the other. It may suit Miss Farren—like another Nellie who might be mentioned—to dress up in the crimson robes of a legal 'Portia,' even with no apparent object, but there is slight justification for the women's petticoats and the



DON SALLUSTE AND MERCEDES (MR. DANBY AND MARION HOOD) ("ALLY SLOPER")

ballet skirts, the Henry Irving head on a 'man-woman,' or the Katti Lanner black gown, in order further to emphasise the humour of so admirable an artist as Mr. Fred Leslie. Both are seen at their very best in the scene that represents a couple of fashionable cells of first-class misdemeanants in prison. Here the fun is direct, genuine, uncompromising, and legitimate. From such a scene, so well acted by both, instinct with true humour and spontaneity, no one could desire the excision of a sentence, or the toning down of a

suggestion. But it is 'playing it rather low down,' as the schoolboys say, when this inimitable pair appear as London sweeps, blackened and grimy, the head and front of a sooty crew ; and, if the famous Gaiety *pas de quatre* is to be parodied on the stage that gave it birth, surely it might be



MISS LETTY LIND AND MR. F. STOREY IN "RUY
BLAS" ("ALLY SLOPER")

done without turning Mr. Henry Irving, Mr. J. L. Toole, Mr. Wilson Barrett, and Mr. Arthur Roberts into grotesque ballet women."

Lloyd's Newspaper said :

"The new piece seems to be constructed on the 'Go-as-you-please' principle, each of the leading performers having songs or dances that are introduced without much apparent regard to appropriateness either to scene or action. But whether Miss Farren and Mr. Leslie were imitating the duettists of the music halls ; whether Miss Farren sang a ditty, 'I'm glad to be back again ;' whether Mr. Leslie executed (and with really genuine

sweetness, a whistling solo; or whether Miss Letty Lind, Miss Sylvia Grey, and Mr. Storey danced, satisfaction with the novelty was pronounced in the heartiest fashion. Of the burlesque itself not much need be said, since it is merely a vehicle for the manifestation of the peculiar talents of the performers. 'Ruy Blas' (Miss Farren) is put into prison for loving the 'Queen of Spain' (Miss Marion Hood), and the schemes of 'Don Salluste' (Mr. Danby) are eventually defeated.

There are a few good puns in the piece, and the music of Herr Meyer Lutz is charming. The mounting of the piece is superb. One of the funniest items is a song, 'Stick to the whisky you're used to,' in which Mr. Leslie is attired half in the traditional garb of a Scotchman and half as an Irishman. The audience, after loudly complimenting the principals, called for Mr. Edwardes, who thanked them for the welcome they had given to the Gaiety company. Mr. Leslie was then summoned to make a speech, and he also thanked the audience for the greeting they

had given to himself and the 'Gaiety Queen'—a term which gave such pleasure as to evoke the shout 'Bravo, Nellie.' This led to the appearance of Miss Farren, who was also called upon to address the public. In tremulous accents she said, 'Boys, I'm so nervous. Really my heart's too full. I have been longing for this night, and now it's come I'm frightened. I thank you, and I can say no more.' With this, amid further cheers, Miss Farren and Mr. Leslie quitted the stage."



MR. LESLIE PLAYS A
"SWEEP"
("ALLY SLOPER")

It is not to be wondered at that Miss Farren

confessed to being frightened, for even Fred Leslie was agitated. In a letter he said :

“You all looked nice and comfortable on Saturday night ; it was more than I felt. Oh the feelings of a nervous mummer on a first night !”



THE SALVATION ARMY DUET (MR F. LESLIE AND MISS E. FARREN) (“ALLY SLOPER”)

Leslie's entrance as the ragged “Don Cæsar” was especially effective. No actor had a keener appreciation of a ragged costume, or could turn it to a better account. “The beautiful rags,” as they have been called, were a great part of the charm which hung about “Rip Van Winkle.” They were even more pronounced and impressive in the part of “Don Cæsar de Bazan.”

Ruy Blas was a tremendous triumph and had a most prosperous run in town and country. Leslie and Miss Farren played to each other as they had never done before, and all who saw their slate dance, with its imitation clatter, and heard their childish duet, "We believe it cos our mother told us so," will call to mind how delightful they were. Their topical duet in this play had the refrain of "I've



MR. LESLIE TAKES HIS SKULL
OFF ("ALLY SLOPER")

just had a wire to say so," and was full of capital hits at the current events of the period. One humour of the burlesque, previously referred to, unfortunately gave offence to Mr. Henry Irving. In a previous burlesque, *Faust up to Date*, in which Mr. Lonnen took the leading part, there was a dance by four ladies which came to be known as the "Gaiety pas de quatre," and Fred thought it would be good fun to burlesque that. Accord-



DON CÆSAR

ingly, the four leading actors in the piece, Messrs. Leslie, Danby, Storey, and Nathan made up their faces according to the portraits of Messrs. Irving, Toole, Wilson Barrett, and Arthur Roberts, and danced the *pas de quatre* in ballet skirts, to the great enjoyment of the audience. Shortly afterwards Fred received from the famous tragedian the letter which occupies the two next pages.

To Mr. Irving's letter Mr. Leslie replied that he was "willing to withdraw the personation but powerless to do so unless ordered by the manager, with whom he respectfully suggested that Mr. Irving should communicate. However, a day or two afterwards, the features of the popular tragedian disappeared from the scene, but Leslie could not help hinting at the suppressed business by masking his face, dropping into the Irving stride as if by accident, and pulling up with a jerk to check the slip. He was always surprised that so clever a man of business as Mr. Irving should have objected to a good advertisement. The suppression, however, did no harm to the career of *Ruy Blas*; quite the contrary, as witness the following letter :

"GAIETY THEATRE, 8th October, 1889.

"Dear Tom,—Come and see a poor tragedian-crushed comedian any night you are in the sloppy neighbourhood. Business is terrific, and the new trio just introduced goes like wildfire. . . .

FRED.'

LYCEUM THEATRE

23 Sept 1899

Dear Mr. Tabor

I see that in
your new brochure
I am put by you
into women's clothes.
I hope that you
will not
withdrew such an
exhibition.

Whether or not

you are doing this thing

by your managers.
 Hence, I cannot tell,
 but it seems to
 me that no considerable
 financial benefit can
 result to such an
 extent.

Very truly yours

Henry Irving

Dear Leslie

The new trio here mentioned was "Razzle-dazzle," a rollicking, reckless, and altogether exuberant song and dance of a most exciting and infectious character, in which "Ruy," "Don Cæsar," and "Don Salluste" took part. It was safe for half a dozen encores every night if required, and was never let pass without at least two repetitions, each of which incited demands for more by reason of the droll variations.

So emphatic was the endorsement of *Ruy Blas* that Leslie at once arranged with his collaborator, Mr. Clark, to complete and turn to account another burlesque on the subject of *Guy Fawkes*, which they had long been developing. When finished, Mr. Arthur Roberts undertook to produce the play, and with his assistance in the principal part, *Guy Fawkes, Esq.*, held the stage at various theatres for a considerable space. On the subject of its production at a Gaiety matinée, Mr. Herbert Clark writes :

"The piece seemed to be a success, and at the close of the performance, when the audience were calling for the authors, I went round to fetch Leslie from his box in order that we might take the 'call' together. To my dismay, he resolutely refused to appear before the curtain, saying that he wished me to have the sole credit, and urging me to 'go on' at once. Finding all remonstrances useless, I sought Mr. George Edwardes, hoping that his persuasive powers might prevail, but by that time Fred was nowhere to be found, and I was most unwillingly compelled to answer the 'call' alone."

Mr. Herbert Clark describes as follows a visit to Madame Tussaud's :

"Leslie learnt that I had never seen the famous Waxworks and took me there. The place was fairly crowded with visitors, and after we had walked about and got weary, Fred seated himself by the side of a waxen effigy, moved with his foot to the front of him a block of wood with a number on it, and told me to stand and look at him. Then he put on a stiff attitude and a stony glare, and the people seeing me interested, gathered round. It was quite funny to see them looking at Fred and referring to their catalogues, and when there was a good mob collected, Leslie startled the lot by springing up and saying, 'I'm rested now ; let's have some tea.'"

A companion anecdote is also supplied by Mr. Clark as follows :

"I was at home at Ipswich and asked Fred over from Clacton, to stay over Sunday and read the lessons in my father's church. He jibbed at the lessons, excusing himself on the plea, 'Gladstone might not like it,' but he came to Ipswich, and, in order that we might discuss our work, he took a room at the White Horse Hotel, immortalised by Charles Dickens. The walls were covered with pictures of the Dickens characters, and, after looking them over, Fred called a maid-servant and addressed her thus : 'If Mr. Pickwick is staying here I should like to see him.' 'Pickwick?' said the girl, 'I have never heard the name, but I will ask the "Boots."' No, the 'Boots' 'didn't know nobody o' the name o' Pickwick.' Leslie was persistent, saying that Mr. Pickwick was a gentleman with a fat chest in a white waistcoat, who certainly did stay at this hotel!' Then the 'Boots' recollected that there was such a 'gent' upstairs, who might be Mr. Pickwick. 'Ah,'

said Leslie, 'here is half a crown for finding him. Go and tell him that Mr. Alfred Jingle and Mr. Samuel Weller are anxious to see him.' He did not wait for the *dénouement*, but led the way into the street and took the first train to Felixstowe, where we resumed our work."



MISS FARREN MAKES THE SECOND EDITION OF
"RUY BLAS" TO GO

Ruy Blas ran through a first and a second edition, and was good enough after all for another turn in Australia.

CHAPTER XXIV

ONE MORE PLAY

*In other things the knowing artist may
Judge better than the people ; but a play—
Made for delight, and no other use—
If you approve it not, has no excuse.*

WALLER'S PROLOGUE TO
THE "MAID'S TRAGEDY."

HAVING in *Ruy Blas* such a secure card, the management of the theatre were in no anxiety about the next production, but the part author of two successful plays found that the weekly royalties came in very pleasantly without any particular effort, and he was looking out for new brains and a new subject. Hence resulted the following epistle :

"GAIETY, *October 29th, 1889.*

"Dear old Tom Vincent,—Good luck over your pantomime. Why should not *we* do a burlesque? I am not very busy just now, and collaboration is a healthy pastime for A. C. Torr. Come round to my room if you are in town any night this week, and we will release a cork. The receipts at the Gaiety are simply phenomenal, and the qualified notices over the piece are fast being wiped out and forgotten

"Thine in friendship,

"FRED LESLIE."

Correspondence and consultations followed in due course, and the process of constructing a burlesque in collaboration may be traced in the following letters. Fred's first idea was to write a play on *The Adventures of Tom and Jerry*, otherwise known as *Life in London*, a book which had a tremendous success a generation or so earlier.

But Miss Farren put in a request to be provided, for once, with a girl's part, and suggested *Cinderella*. This was quite enough to divert the scheme of the authors, and, still with the *Tom and Jerry* idea in the brain, the first rough sketch of *Cinder-Ellen up Too Late* was evolved. Here are quotations bearing on the subject:

"GAIETY THEATRE, June 24th 1890.

". . . . Ellen of the Cinder-path sends kindest regards to the House of Vincent

"FRED LESLIE."

"GRAND HOTEL, BRIGHTON (on tour),
"July 26th or 7th, 1890.

"Dear Tom,—Come down and spend a day or two here as my guest. Had a lovely drive down through Kent. Thanks for the route

"FRED."

The *Brighton Argus* in 1890 published the following article:

"The prince of burlesque actors, Mr. Fred Leslie, gave me a cordial welcome yesterday (writes a representative of the

Argus) after I had been ushered into his room at the Grand Hotel. It must be quite four years since I had the pleasure of a chat with Mr. Leslie. On that occasion it took place in the coffee-room of the Old Ship. Then, as now, he was delighting the Brighton playgoers. He was playing in *Jack Sheppard* at the time. He was then running up the ladder of fame as a burlesque actor; now he is at the tip top, and can continue 'in possession' as long as he likes.

"But to be the idol of a Gaiety audience is not, it appears, Mr. Leslie's ideal. He entertains precisely the same views now on this point that he did when I first saw him. He makes no secret of it.

"AFTER TWO YEARS.

"My present engagement,' said he, 'is for two years. At the end of that time I desert the Gaiety and burlesque, and go into management on my own account, producing comedy.'

"As actor-manager?' I asked.

"Yes,' was the reply. 'It is only what other actors are doing who have, in the first instance, made a name in burlesque. Take Charles Wyndham, and by the way, I have a programme of a burlesque where Irving appeared in skirts.'

"How will your Gaiety admirers submit to such a desertion?' I asked.

"Mr. Leslie smiled. It was the smile of a man who is tolerably confident as regards the future.

"You must not forget,' was the significant reply, 'that there are at the present time many good burlesque actors—Roberts, Lonnen, and others, whose names are familiar to the public.'

"Quite so,' was the response, 'but only one Mr. Fred Leslie.'

"Once more a pleasant smile suffused the expressive countenance of the talented actor.

"But it is evident Mr. Leslie has made up his mind on this

point. He has been saving his money, so he says, in order that he may carry out his idea, and he is convinced, when the time comes, that he will experience no difficulty in getting a theatre in town. He has certainly troops of friends who will wish him the best of success.

“MORE POPULAR THAN EVER.

“To proceed, however, with the interview. I ventured to ask him his opinion as to the popularity of burlesque.

“‘It is more popular than ever,’ was his unhesitating answer. ‘It will be as lasting as the drama itself.’

“‘And the burlesques themselves, do they improve or deteriorate as literary productions?’

“‘They are not so good.’

“‘Do you say that in your dual capacity as author and actor?’

“‘Yes, and the reason in a great measure is this: the call is greater on the artist than it used to be. That is how the artist gets the high salary and the author the low one.’

“‘May I ask what led to your becoming an author?’

“‘It was only because I was called upon to rewrite other people’s burlesques that at last I was induced to collaborate with another author. I am glad to say,’ he added, ‘that it has not been altogether unsuccessful. We made a thousand pounds out of *Miss Esmeralda*; we expect to clear very nearly four thousand out of *Ruy Blas*.’ Happy authors!

“DINNER DIGESTIVES.

“Then the conversation reverted for a brief space to that very choice mixture of funniosities. Mr. Leslie explained that *Ruy Blas* was really a gag burlesque. ‘We are not educational,’ he parenthetically remarked, ‘we are dinner digestives rather than educators.’ Then he went on to explain that the gags in *Ruy Blas* were rehearsed. The piece was not so much a go-as-you-please burlesque as it seemed at first to be, because

the company had plenty of time to rehearse and build it up. In this way things that would have crept in after the first night crept in during rehearsals.

"There is one funny incident in it, however, that was introduced quite by accident, and has ever since been, in Mr. Leslie's opinion, one of the most taking items. It occurs in the black and white dance. 'When I did the dance first of all,' he explained, 'I was not quite sure of the step. I found myself going wrong, and in order to cover my shortcomings I spoke to the audience. The idea was caught at once, and the result was a very successful effect.'

"'Has *Ruy Blas* had to undergo much change?' I asked.

"'Not so much as previous burlesques. As a rule, burlesques have to be bolstered up with two, three, four, and as many as five new editions. We have only had to give one new edition to *Ruy Blas*. Of course it is necessary to give a burlesque a fillip with the introduction of new songs.'

"AT NINE IN THE MORNING.

"By way of illustrating the enormous success of *Ruy Blas*, Mr. Leslie incidentally mentioned that persons had written to him in town who had seen it as many as sixty times. 'The devotion of the audience at the Gaiety,' he went on, 'is simply remarkable. You would scarcely believe there could be such loyalty. On the occasion of the last night of *Ruy Blas* at the Gaiety—after the play had been running ten months—there were people as early as nine o'clock in the morning sitting on the steps playing cards, and they remained there all day, in order to be sure of seats when the doors opened at half-past seven in the evening.'

"Mr. Leslie, as an author, is perhaps one of the most candid that you could meet with. His opinion is that there is very little due to the authors nowadays in burlesque. 'As a matter of fact he says, 'it is sad to say it, but it has been

proved recently that a good burlesque does not draw as much money as an inferior one. This may be paradoxical, but it is to be explained, as I have said before, in the fact that the success of the piece depends upon the actor and not so much upon the author.'

"‘RUY BLAS’ WILL SUIT THE AMERICANS.

"A casual reference to the forthcoming American and Australian tour elicited the fact that the company are looking forward to it, and sanguine that it will prove a prosperous trip. The general impression amongst Americans who have seen *Ruy Blas* in London is that it will suit the tastes of their countrymen, because it is replete with the variety element. They prefer that to the more succinct burlesque story.

"Mr. Leslie said they would open at the Broadway Theatre, New York, on November 24th, afterwards play in the principal cities, then cross from San Francisco to Australia in the following May, fulfil a fifteen weeks' tour, and then home again.

"‘CINDER-ELLEN’ NEXT!

"‘And what may we expect when you return, or is it too early to ask?’

"‘We shall re-open in London with a piece to be called *Cinder-Ellen*—a corruption of *Cinderella*. Miss Farren will play the titular part. It will not be overburdened with plot. The curtain will go up at eight o'clock, and we intend to promise the audience’—and Mr. Leslie said this with a very wicked smile—‘that the plot shall finish at 8.15.’

"‘And what then?’

"‘Well, the audience will be introduced to some very novel features.’

"‘And who will be responsible for this success of the future?’

"‘Mr. W. T. Vincent, and yours truly.’”

From the annexed letter it will be seen that it was proposed to leave out the visit to the Grand Theatre at Islington, and it was therefore necessary to hasten the next play in view of emergencies :

“ MORRISON'S HOTEL, DUBLIN,

September 17th, 1890.

“ My dear Tom,—George Edwardes, to enable us to go for a holiday, has abandoned the last week at the Grand, and Monte Carlo, instead of Islington, will see me on Monday, October 27th. This necessitates our meeting each other either at Manchester or Liverpool for a real right down serious chat about our offspring. I leave it to you to choose which of the two weeks to pay the visit. Did you get a line from me at Brum?

FRED LESLIE.”

“ LYCEUM THEATRE, EDINBURGH,

30/9/90.

“ . . . Come when and where you like and I will meet you at the station ; here this week, Glasgow next, Manchester to follow, and Liverpool to finish. . . . ”

“ WINDSOR HOTEL, GLASGOW.

“ My dear Tom,—The scrip arrived. Splendid, old man ! Certain go. Much too long, of course, but our conference in Manchester will doubtless bring about the absolutely necessary condensation. The school scene questions and answers are great—but too abundant. Nellie is beside herself with joy, and thinks her part will *make her*. Shall be staying at the Queen's Hotel in Cottonopolis, and when you are likely to arrive send a ‘wire to say so.’ By-the-bye, Mrs. Booth's demise and the growing public favour that is being shown to Salva-

tionists have necessitated the withdrawal of this duet to avoid
'getting the goose.' . . .

FRED LESLIE.



FRED LESLIE AND NELLIE FARREN IN SALVATION ARMY DUET
AT A CONCERT

At the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, *Ruy Blas*
played for a week, but both Fred Leslie and
Nellie Farren were out of the cast for most of

the time through sickness, Leslie's attack being a return of his old enemy gastritis, and Miss Farren's a severe twinge of the rheumatism which has since so grievously afflicted her. However, we were able to have a few valuable conferences



MANCHESTER FROM QUEEN'S HOTEL. (DRAWN BY MR. W. H. KENDAL,
AND TAKEN BY PERMISSION FROM THE "STRAND MAGAZINE")

on the subject of the coming burlesque, to which "our Nellie" contributed some decidedly useful amendments. Fred sat for hours together in the window of the Queen's Hotel, studying the situations of the burlesque, or strolled quietly up and down the Manchester Piccadilly, discussing

the dialogue and the lyrics, the dances, and the dresses. He was firm in adhering to the Georgian era, or "Tom and Jerry" period, and a week later sent me the following communication :



PICCADILLY PAVEMENT, MANCHESTER. (PHOTOGRAPHED
BY POULTON AND SON)

"CHILDWALL ABBEY, NEAR LIVERPOOL,
October 20th, 1890

"My dear Tom,—I think you had better call on Edwardes, if you can spare the time, and furnish him with full particulars as to scenery and costumes. Bear the following in mind: That the 'period' must be 'Tom and Jerry' idealised—*i.e.*,

'conical' instead of 'bell topper' hats; tights instead of 'stocking-net' trousers. Act i., scene 1: All the principal gentlemen must be in scarlet hunting coats, white breeches, and boots of the period (*à la* Tony Lumpkin), and black velvet hunting caps. Ladies in riding habits, wide brim hats and feathers (see Mrs. Beere in *London Assurance*). Squire to dress as 'Jorrocks,' only in the period. Scene 2: All characters, excepting self and Nell and two mashers, to wear 'surtouts' or overcoats (with capes) over first scene dresses. Charleys' dresses 'typical.'

"Nell's dresses: 1, Brown rags; 2, pretty and cheap sort of dress.

"Scenery.—Act i. scene 1, very dark oak hall with staircase and gallery above (*vide* sketch in MS.).

"Act i. Scene 2.—Covent Garden Market (*vide* sketch in MS.).

Act ii. Scene 1.—School: Pink panels (chaffing red brick Board Schools) to match dresses of girls, with white dado and frieze (*vide* sketch in MS.).

Act ii. Scene 2.—Handsome palace set with practicable clock-tower at back. Carriage drive and fountain at back (see sketch in MS.).

"Dear Tom, I hope this is sufficient.

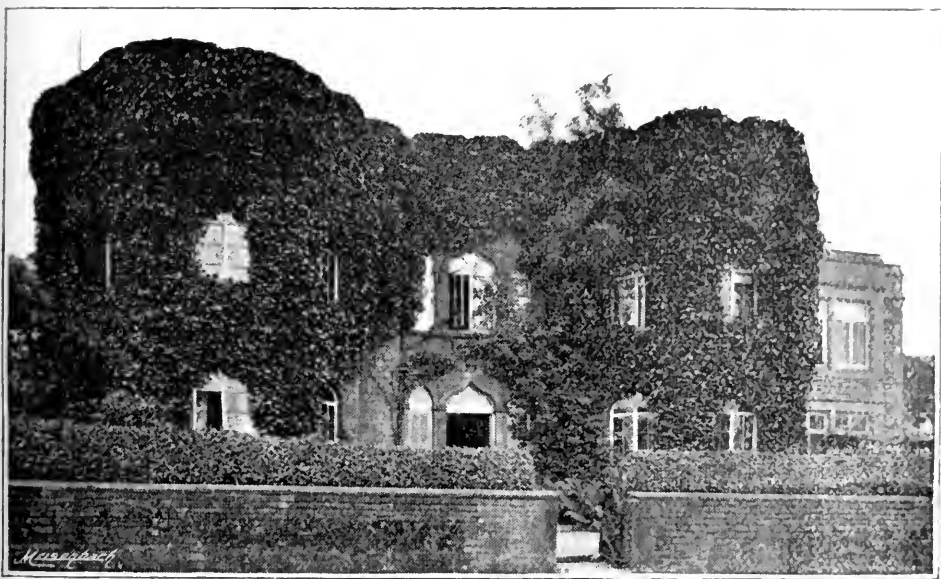
"Yours,

"FRED."

The Islington week could not be avoided, after all, but consideration for the health of the two leading members of the company induced Mr. George Edwardes, not without difficulty, to cancel all the engagements across the Atlantic. Fred was therefore able to take a long and much-needed holiday, but did not leave England until the 12th of November.

Writing a week later from the Grand Hotel, Monte Carlo, he was in transports at the restoration of his health and the loveliness of the place, saying :

"I cannot describe to you how heavenly is my holiday ! Never in this world have I felt so happy or well as I have done this last fortnight. Weather simply lovely, temperature just



CHILDWALL ABBEY, NEAR LIVERPOOL

right. I should love to stop here until March, but foreign plum-pudding is not so nice as the English article. . . . Lord Randolph Churchill has the next room to me here. . . . Just off for a drive over the mountains as far as Nice."

Thoroughly restored, he was home again at Christmas, and then accepted an invitation to visit his friend Mr. Elliott of Liverpool, but first stayed for a time at Chester, being a great

admirer of the quaint and picturesque old city. Writing from the Grosvenor Hotel there on Jan. 31st, 1891, he says :

“Dear Tom,—Edwardes has *Cinder-~~Ellen~~*, and I await his verdict. I am the guest for four weeks of Mr. Elliott of Liverpool, pleasantly passing the time here driving round the Duke of Westminster’s estate and attending all the meets in the



LESLIE’S DINING-ROOM AT CHILDWALL ABBEY

neighbourhood. You should see me in my gaiters and breeches all day long, looking like Squire Leslie of Leslie Hall. I move from here on Monday to Childwall Abbey, near Liverpool, for a week. If you like to come down I can promise you a carriage and pair every day.”

The writing, re-writing, and general repairs of the new burlesque still went on, and Wilhelm, expert in costumes, was called in to advise as to

dresses. A report as to his suggestions evoked from Leslie the following protest :

"CHILDWALL ABBEY, LIVERPOOL,

10th February, 1891.

"Dear Tom,—It was to avoid resemblance to pantomimes on the same subject that I suggested a change of period, and what is now advised by Wilhelm (who naturally prefers an earlier one to afford him scope) will be terribly 'remindful,' and I fear 'stale beer.' Robertson, in *School*, clothed his characters in modern dress, and why should not we innovate? Our burlesque borders on 'comedy,' hence the advisability of either 'square cuts' or 'Tom and Jerry.' Wilhelm's *metier* is undoubtedly picturesqueness rather than strong character, and I prefer the piece to score and Wilhelm to run the risk rather than *vice versa*. What say you? Take *Jack Sheppard* as an instance. How would that have got on if the artist's desire for the picturesque had been considered! No, Tom; I am afraid of pantomime prettiness. Then, again, your names—Sir Ludgate Hill, Linconzina, Fettalana, &c. Imagine these people in *Romeo and Juliet* costumes!!

"*Re* Coster for Nell—she now thinks it politic to steer clear of the hit of *Joan of Arc* ('Round the Town') and suggests (for the sake of show) to escape with me at end of scene 1 in a male servant's costume—which will allow her to play the orange-woman in scene 2. Love to all,

FRED.

"If you have seen *Joan of Arc* you will understand the reason of this suggestion."

On his return to London he wrote as follows :

"53, LEWISHAM HIGH ROAD, NEW CROSS,

5th March, 1891.

"Dear Tom,—You will hear with great pleasure that Mr. Edwardes has decided to do *Cinder-Ellen* in Australia *après*

tous. When my wife's condition (it has been very critical) permits me to run up to town I will call on Wilhelm *re* costumes. . . . "

" 53, LEWISHAM HIGH ROAD,
19th March, 1891.

" Would have written before, but have been confined to bed with gastritis—now better, thank God. Wife just about the same. . . . "

" NEW CROSS, March 30th, 1891.

" The 'copy book' don't read quite 'singable' (Nelly says so, and she's always right I've heard you say), so when you return we must consider the duet again. . . . "

It will be seen that Leslie was by this time home again, and residing at his house in the Lewisham High Road, New Cross. It was there that his wife, whose health had long been failing, died on the 23rd of March, 1891, and Fred, who had been constant in waiting upon her, had the melancholy task of closing her eyes. He buried her in Charlton Cemetery, the first occupant of the grave which he hoped in the fulness of his time to share. She was but thirty-two years of age, and the three children left to their father's charge were still so young as to require a parent's constant care. However, Fred was able to place the two boys advantageously at boarding-school, with a home in the vacations at his mother's house in Wood Street, Woolwich, while Dorothy was gladly taken charge of by her maternal grandmother. There was little time to

make these needful provisions, for the long vacation of five months had nearly ended, and Leslie was under an engagement to visit Australia with the Gaiety company, and introduce both *Ruy Blas* and *Cinder-Ellen* to the Antipodeans. His salary was fixed at £100 per week, the same amount as he received during the previous trip to Australia and America in 1888. In the interval while playing in England he was paid £75 per week. The £100 was, however, continued when he next returned to the Gaiety, and it was never exceeded, but it had been arranged between him and the management that, in commencing a new engagement in April, 1893, his salary was to be £120 a week.

The rise and progress of our actor may be shown here in tabular form, under his various engagements :

Engaged by	Where.	Piece.	Commenced.	Salary per week.
Miss Kate Santley	Royalty Theatre	<i>Paul Pry.</i>	Feb. 7, 1878	£1
Mr. E. L. Knapp	Royal, Glasgow	<i>Lady of the Lake.</i>	Sept. 1. "	£3
Miss Kate Santley	Royalty	(special engagement)	Oct. "	£2 15s.
Miss Selina Dolaro	Folly	Year's agreement.	Easter, 1879	£7
Mr. Chas. Morton	Alhambra	<i>Dragoons, &c.</i>	Oct. "	£8 8s.
"	"	<i>La Petite Mademoiselle.</i>	(run)	
"	"	<i>La Fille du Tambour Major.</i>	April, 1880	£10
"	"	<i>Mefistofele II.</i>	Dec. "	£12
"	"	<i>Jeanne, Jeannette, and Jeanneton.</i>	March, 1881	£12
"	"	<i>Bronze Horse.</i>	July "	£15
Messrs. Comley & Barton	America	<i>Mdme. Favart and Olivette.</i>	Sept. "	£25

Engaged by	Where.	Piece.	Commenced.	Salary per week.
Mons. Marius . .	Avenue	<i>Mdmc. Favart.</i>	March, 1882	£25
Mr. Geo. Wood .	"	<i>Manteaux Noirs.</i>	June, "	£25
Mr. A. Henderson	Comedy	<i>Rip Van Winkle.</i>	Oct. 14, "	£25
Mr. John McCaull	America	<i>Merry War</i> and <i>Beggar Student.</i>	Autumn, 1883	£40
The Directors	Alhambra	<i>Beggar Student.</i>	May, 1884	£40
Mr. A. Henderson	Comedy	<i>Rip Van Winkle.</i>	Sept. 1884	£40
"	"	<i>Grand Mogul</i> and <i>Barbe Bleue.</i>	Nov. 17, 1884	£40
"	Provinces	<i>Rip Van Winkle.</i>	Summer, 1885	£40
Mr. F. J. Harris & Miss Consuelo	Opera	<i>Fay o' Fire.</i>	Nov. 14, 1885	£40
Messrs. Hollings- head & Edwardes	Comique			
Mr. Geo. Edwardes	Gaiety	<i>Little Jack Sheppard.</i>	Dec. 26 "	£40
"	"	Three years'	" 1886	£50
"	"	engagement.	" 1887	£55
"	"	<i>Miss Esmeralda</i>	" 1888	£60
"	Australia & America	and <i>Monte Cristo.</i>	1888-9	£100
"	Gaiety	<i>Ruy Blas.</i>	Sept. 21, 1889	£75
"	Australia	<i>Ruy Blas</i> and <i>Cinder-Ellen.</i>	April, 1891	£100
"	Gaiety	<i>Cinder-Ellen.</i>	Dec. 24, 1891	£100
"	"	Prospective engagement for 1893		£120

In addition to his salary, Leslie received royalties from his burlesques, sharing equally with his collaborator in each instance. From this source his income was considerably augmented, as the royalties on a Gaiety burlesque amount to £3 or £4 for each performance in London and the chief towns, with reduced charges for second and third-rate places. It is not unusual for two or three companies to be "out" with the same play at the one time.

There was a farewell gathering at the Hôtel Métropole, Charing Cross, a night or two before the departure for Australia, and it was a large and lively function.

When the time came to part, Mrs. Grey (mother of the graceful Sylvia) said to our hero, "Now, Mr. Leslie, I am an old woman, and I am going to kiss you," which she did. "So am I," "So am I," was the chorus of exclamations from



TURNING THEIR BACKS ("ALLY SLOPER")

all the ladies present, and in the space of about a minute, poor Fred had to submit to about a hundred kisses. He took the punishment meekly, and remarked that in a kissing competition he had beaten the record of "the immortal Pickwick." And so the Gaiety favourites once more turned their backs upon their native land.

CHAPTER XXV

ANTIPODES

*Each change of many-coloured life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new.*

SAMUEL JOHNSON'S PROLOGUE ON OPENING OF
DRURY LANE THEATRE.

FOR the Australian voyage, berths were taken for the whole of the Gaiety contingent in the Orient steamship, *Oroya*, and on April 24th the bulk of the company embarked at the Royal Albert Docks, while a few went on overland to the Mediterranean. Fred had a very pleasant tour through Italy, but found fault because, in going from end to end of the country, he "never saw a monkey nor heard a barrel-organ."

Some of Leslie's letters written during this tour may, though sacred, be tenderly added to his memoirs. They were addressed to his motherless children, and have a pathetic interest now that they are fatherless also. Two of these letters were from Naples :

"HOTEL BRISTOL, NAPLES, 1st May, 1891.

"My dear darling Dorothy,—I found your nice letter awaiting me here; also one from Lionel; both of which I

enjoyed reading. So glad the box of sweets reached you and Elsie. I thought you would appreciate sweets more than flowers, that's why I changed my mind. The weather here is delightful, and Vesuvius is smoking away like anything. . . . Some day I will let you, Leslie, and Lionel visit Rome when you are all old enough to appreciate it; it is a most wonderful place, and full of most interesting sights. The drivers here guide the horses by their noses instead of by their mouths, like this, and goats in twenties and thirties parade the city to be milked, so I have goat's milk in my tea instead of cow's milk. . . .

"Your fond, loving FATHER."

*Drivers here guide the horses by their
noses instead of by their mouths
like this*



PART OF LESLIE'S LETTER TO HIS DAUGHTER

"HOTEL BRISTOL, NAPLES.

"My darling Boys,—I have had such a great treat travelling through Italy, and when you are old enough to appreciate it I will take you both to Rome, which is the most interesting city I have ever visited; so read up your Roman history in anticipation. I went to see the ruins of Pompeii to-day; they impressed me very much. Naples is a beautiful spot, and street singers are in abundance, accompanying themselves on man-

dolines and guitars. Goats parade the streets to be milked, so I have *their* milk instead of cow's milk in my tea. The



DOROTHY

horses here have hard times; the Neapolitans treat them shamefully. I think our poor little Daisy would die if she were treated like them. The weather is simply lovely, and I do nothing but drive about the place and eat macaroni, which is all made here. I saw the poor people making it to-day. I expect to have a nice passage to Australia, and plenty of cricket on the ship. Glad to hear you have started cricket at the College. Go in for it; it is excellent exercise, and will do you both good.

“Your loving FATHER.”

In a letter written from Naples to his collaborator and dated May 3rd, 1891, he said :

“I have been very busy cramming odd bits of fun into *Cinder-Ellen*. If the passage

is fairly calm, I will work on it so long as the ship's ink lasts.”

Business letters from Suez and Aden showed that he was carrying out his threat, and then

came a long silence while the ship was crossing the broad ocean.

Mrs. George Edwardes, who went to Australia, accompanied by her mother, in the ship *Oroya*, which carried the Gaiety company, says :



LESLIE AND LIONEL

“Leslie was the best possible of shipmates, always first in planning and providing our amusements. He would sing for us after dinner whenever he was asked to do so, and was a general favourite throughout the ship. But what we liked best, we Gaiety people, was to get out of the saloon into some quiet corner, where we could just hear the piano, and improvise tragedy-burlesques of the *Mary-the-Child-of-Misfortune* order, and laugh at our own nonsense. Mr. William Rignold, who was also a passenger, was usually one of the

party, and Leslie was very apt at the business, which he said he had practised as a boy."

Mrs. Edwardes also gives the following specimen of a good repartee, which, although it has since been heard on the stage, she believes to have been originated by Fred Leslie on the occasion referred to :

"A good-hearted fellow who was among the passengers gave one evening a little entertainment to the gentlemen, and of course the ladies know no more than they were told of the proceedings. But, according to the evidence, the conversation turned on beverages in general and whisky in particular, with a strong effusion of the jocular banter in which gentlemen are supposed to indulge under the circumstances. One, who was a German, a genial soul, who loved a bit of fun, even though it were at his own expense, lamented that he had not acquired a taste for the 'mountain dew,' and that, indeed, he had to avoid whisky altogether, as it did not agree with his digestion. Another, a Scotchman, thereupon observed that he had been taking whisky, in moderation, for a good many years without any perceptible inconvenience or injury, and that he believed his stomach would submit to the treatment as long as he was likely to require refreshing.

"'Ah!' interposed Fred, 'there is all the difference; your stomach was not made in Germany.'

"The prompt application of the well-known trade-mark was relished as much by the Teuton as by any one of the company."

Miss Sylvia Grey, who has been associated with the Gaiety Theatre for a succession of years, has something to relate of the same

outward journey. On board ship or on shore they were a happy family, and were constantly contriving fun for the general amusement. During the voyage out, says Miss Grey, she found in a nut at dessert a double kernel, and shared the prize, after the manner of childhood, with Mr. Leslie, uttering the talismanic word "Philipine!" which is a challenge never to be refused, though it binds the one who shall first receive anything from the other to make that other a present. Both she and Leslie were wary, and there was many a hearty laugh in the ship over their little artifices to entrap each other, their narrow escapes, and their triumphs. For fully a week the game was kept merrily going, and at last Sylvia fell a victim in a moment of distracting excitement. There was a fancy dress ball in the saloon, and Leslie, as usual on such occasions, distinguished himself by the eccentricity of his



MISS SYLVIA GREY

make-up. He went to the ball as a Turkish bath, clad in coarse towels, with a big sponge for a hat, a thermometer for a cockade, and buttons made of soap. Miss Grey appeared in the garb of a Chinese boy, lent her by the cook, and, like everybody else, was convulsed by the bath costume. This was Fred's opportunity. "Excuse me," he said, "your hat is a little wrong. Allow me," and, gently removing it, he adjusted something and returned it, saying, "Now put it on." "Thank you," said Sylvia. "Phillipine!" said Fred, and Nellie Farren called her "a gommy." So he got his present at the first port.

In due course the ship reached her destination, and then the mails brought home regular tidings. Leslie's first thought naturally turned to his children. Here is another letter to Dorothy :

" PRINCESS'S THEATRE, MELBOURNE,
11th July, 1891.

"My own darling Dorothy,—And how is my loved one? Leslie told me in his last letter that you had a nasty cold ; I do hope now you are quite well. I have addressed this to Clacton, feeling sure you will be there by this time, and having a jolly time with Elsie, Leslie, Lionel, and your aunties. I have bought you some parrots, and am teaching them to whistle and talk ; one says 'Dorothy' already. I hope the weather with you is better than it is out here ; it has done nothing but rain ever since I arrived. Well, I opened at the theatre a fortnight ago and had a great reception, and the 'Bogie Man,' that you used to sing, was the hit of the piece. I get three encores for it every evening. I am busy at work on

the new burlesque, which is to be done in four weeks' time. . . . I suppose you have some nice new frocks for the sea-side! I saw a little child off to England to-day by the ship, and her name was 'Dorothy!' She was the daughter of Mr. Garner, the manager of the theatre here, and is about your age. I hope you will keep up your attendance at school pretty regularly after your holidays. I want to hear you play the piano and read nice books when I come home. . . .

"Your affectionate FATHER."

Of merely friendly correspondence the first that need be quoted is the following extract :

CINDER-ELLEN UP TOO LATE

"MENZIES HOTEL, MELBOURNE,
14th July, 1891.

"Dear Tom,—. . . All things in connection with *Cinder-Ellen* progress well, and rehearsals are held every day. It is not at all likely that the piece will be wanted for the next four weeks, as *Ruy Blas* is holding its own, our fortnight's business with it exceeding the corresponding two weeks of our previous visit. *Cinder-Ellen* is to be beautifully mounted, and I think I can safely say that you will have a cablegram before this letter confirming my favourable expectations. Nelly is wonderfully well and as cheeky as a two-year-old. She knows the whole of her part, and is going in for a big success for us. She asks me to send her love to all the Vincents. Just off to paint my face.

"Sincerely yours,

"FRED."

His surmise respecting the cablegram was

verified. The telegraphic message arrived on August 23rd, and contained the one word

“VINENUM,”

which, translated by a pre-arranged code, read :

“*Cinder-ElLEN* is produced, and is a success.”



ENTRANCE OF MISS FARREN AS
“CINDER-ELLEN”

Fred's fuller report was contained in a letter as follows :

“MENZIES HOTEL, MELBOURNE,
24th August, 1891.

“My dear Tom,—I wired you *date of production and result*, and sincerely hope the 'grams reached you safely. I now enclose cuttings, which for a burlesque are to my mind splendid! Nelly was simply great, and we look forward to our London opening with very sanguine feelings. I registered the piece this morning in my name, and shall leave power of

attorney with Williamson to protect it over here. I took the liberty of making great alterations and cuts, and even then, act i. played two hours! To-night we play it in three acts, making scene 1 an act.

“The show was over very late indeed, and it is the highest compliment that can be paid the piece that the audience remains seated to the very end. Nearly £2000 has been spent on the production, and a suggestion of mine about an illuminated bouquet at the finish was carried out and captured

the house. Oddly enough, the Charleys' chorus didn't gee. The barrow business went immensely, and the schoolroom drill caught the fancy of the house at once. Storey was good; Danby ditto. Nelly made a great point on an exit with the aforesaid barrow. Seeing her father searching for her with a staff and his hair turned white, she moved slowly with face



THE BARROW BUSINESS (MISS FARREN AND MR. LESLIE)

towards him sorrowfully expressing pity and compassion. You could read in her features regret at leaving father, home, and friends. It was real pathos, and, like most touches of genius, indescribable. Her next best hit was an attack of hysteria in the schoolroom, when, discarding the dress and voice of the old Professor, I speak to her in my own natural voice and she turns and recognises me. She sends her con-

gratulations, and her only wish is that you were on the spot to see and hear for yourself. . . .

"Believe me, believe me,

"Yours sincerely,

"FRED LESLIE."

A fortnight later came confirmation strong :



MISS FARREN AS "CINDER-ELLEN"

"SHE'S BEEN WASHED"

Almost without exception the Australian critics gave complimentary notices of the production. The *Melbourne Argus* said :

"The prospect of assisting at the original production of a

"MELBOURNE,
Sept. 8th, 1891.

"Dear Tom,—*Cinder-Ellen* is simply terrific, and the houses are enormous. Cuttings enclosed. Similarly favourable pars are constantly appearing and our camp is full of joy. All well. Off to Sydney on Saturday. . . ."



CINDER-ELLEN IN SCHOOL

new burlesque by the London Gaiety Company was sufficient to attract a crowded audience to the Princess's Theatre on Saturday evening, when *Cinder-Ellen up Too Late*, an old friend with a new face, was presented for the first time on any stage, with great sumptuary and scenic magnificence. The libretto is the result of a collaboration between Mr. A. C. Torr



CINDER-ELLEN COMES TO THE WEDDING

and Mr. W. T. Vincent, and the music is the work of Meyer Lutz.

"The cinder maiden, who, with varying attributes, is enshrined in the nursery lore of all nations, reveals some hitherto unsuspected characteristics when supplied with an up-to-date background and exposed to the fierce light of the sacred lamp of burlesque, but her new life-history, although

utterly irreconcilable with received accounts, nevertheless has a certain coherency running through it which seems to indicate that the authors had a settled design, and declined to be content with the casual juxtaposition of oddities which usually does duty for this species of dramatic composition. Although the public were politely warned by advertisement to be in their



seats at a quarter to eight precisely, as the plot would finish at ten minutes to eight, an attentive observer could easily make out that the performance was not intended to be so much a fortuitous concourse of songs and dances, leading nowhere, as a logical sequence of situations interspersed with bright music and more or less apposite quips and cranks. The beginning of the first act promised very well, and, as it is the province of burlesque to supply even the most jealous and unlovable characters with the comeliest of faces and the daintiest of dresses, Miss Sylvia Grey and Miss Florence Levey, charmingly costumed, made their bows as the daughters of 'Sir Ludgate Hill' and elder sisters of 'Cinder-Ellen.' They

were attired in ethereal riding-habits of white and pale blue silk, and it was, of course, only natural that they should exhibit their fondness for equestrian exercise by an expressive *pas de deux*, in which they curveted and caracoled with delightful ease and grace, while their parent, who was impersonated by Mr. Danby, sang a tuneful hunting song in the early English style. With appetites stimulated by these *hors d'œuvres* the audience waited impatiently for further delicacies to be administered by 'Cinder-Ellen' and the Prince's servant, who presently appeared, and

made love to each other and fun for the audience with unflagging vivacity. Miss Farren's principal contribution was a song in which she advised all and sundry, no matter in what unpleasant circumstances they might be placed, to 'always make the best of it,' and Mr. Leslie, casting off the trappings of a 'gentleman's-help,' blossomed out, with the assistance of a false nose and moustache, into the counterfeit presentment of a brother comedian, who is also giving an entertainment in the city, and recited a stirring monologue, with band and limelight effects, entitled 'Gone Bung.' 'Prince Belgravia' arrives in the person of Mr. Storey, and a grand banquet is held on the stage, forming, probably, the most brilliant spectacle that has been presented in a Melbourne theatre. Amid the gleam of silver-plate and the sparkle of cunningly arranged electric lights, the Prince is fascinated by 'Cinder-Ellen,' who really does not look bad now that she has discarded her mop and pail, and taken the curl-papers out of her hair. But the household drudge has a most unorthodox contempt for the proposed royal alliance, and flies from her adorer in the garb of a costermonger, wheeling her heart's true love, disguised in a costermonger's barrow, into a pretty scene representing Covent Garden Market. Here the rest of the *dramatis personæ* gambol about in search of the fugitives, who are arrested by a guard of Charleys just before the curtain



MR. FRED STOREY AS PRINCE
BELGRAVIA

falls on the first act. 'Cinder-Ellen' is forthwith consigned to a boarding-school, where she is visited by the Prince's servant, who has assumed the rôle of a Government inspector, and who explains after some circumlocution that he has a gooseberry mark on his wrist, and is therefore the only real and genuine prince. The performance closes with an effective tableau, in



LINCONZINA (MISS SYLVIA GREY)

which the lovers are united in a brilliant setting of gorgeous bouquets and coloured electric light.

"The first act played for just two hours, which is much longer than Melbourne audiences are accustomed to, and cutting the burlesque into three acts instead of two would certainly improve it.

"Miss Farren played the title rôle with characteristic drollery and freshness, showing here and there gleams of dramatic force

far above the ordinary level of burlesque. Mr. Leslie, as the prince's servant, had several opportunities to which he did full justice. As 'Linconzina' and 'Fettalana,' Miss Grey and Miss Levey looked charming and danced gracefully. Mr. Danby represented 'Sir Ludgate Hill' as a sort of elderly 'Tony Lumpkin.' As 'Prince Belgravia,' Mr. Storey, who has a face that lends

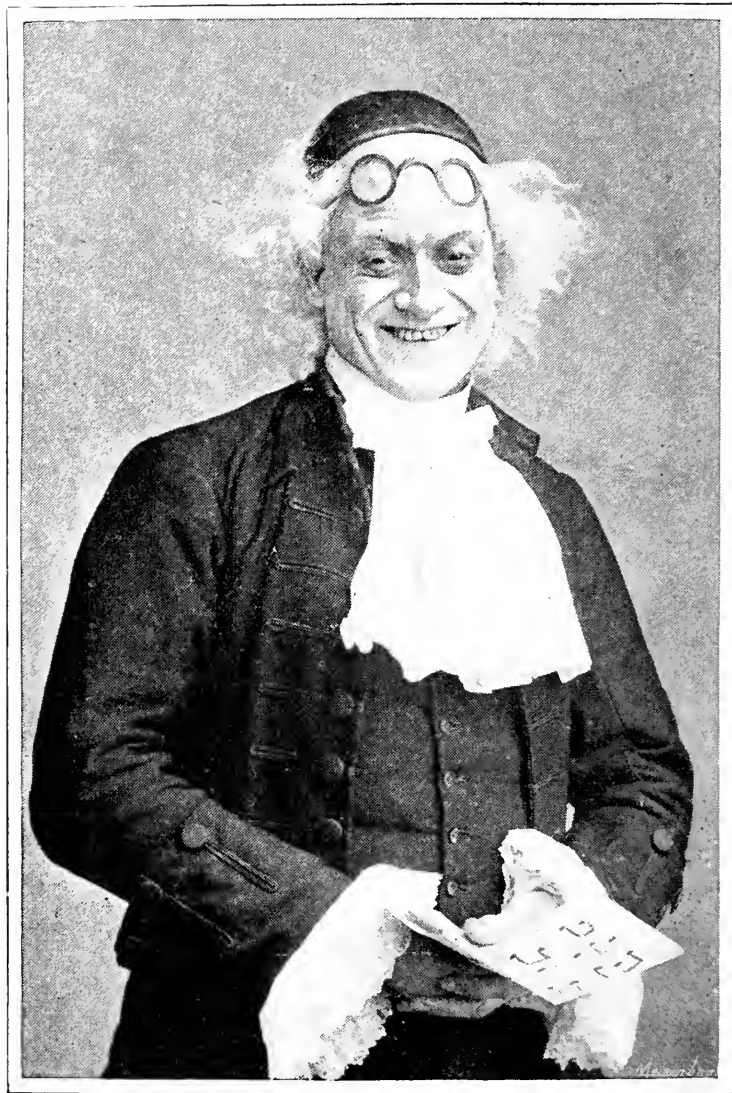


FETTALANA (MISS FLORENCE LEVEY)

itself to originalities in the way of make-up, performed some extraordinary feats of dancing, and played with great dash and briskness. The costumes, which were designed and executed by local firms, are to be used in the production of the burlesque in London next Christmas. All the accessories were on a scale of equal magnificence, and in the banqueting scene and the final tableau the display was quite superb."

The *Melbourne Age* remarked that :

“The production of a new burlesque in this city by the Gaiety Company, in advance of its performance in London,



FRED LESLIE AS THE PROFESSOR

was an incident so complimentary to the judgment of the Victorian public that an overflowing audience was relied upon.

. . . . In the school-room of Bloomsbury College, Professor Leslie asked his pupils, 'Who first conquered England?' and Cinder answered, 'The Australian cricketers!' The burlesque closed with a brilliant spectacle, in which the whole strength of the company, in marriage costume, was assembled before the footlights. The holders of bridal bouquets were seen holding them up in the form of a vast pyramid, and from their midst a number of delicate lilies illuminated by electricity detached themselves. Each bouquet was also made luminous by the same medium, and upon this delightfully pretty scene the curtain eventually fell amidst a storm of applause.

"*Cinder-Ellen* is altogether one of the most attractive and gorgeous stage spectacles yet produced in Melbourne."

The *Melbourne Daily Telegraph* was of the same opinion :

"Special interest was attached to the performance from the fact that the Gaiety Company had resolved to produce it first in Melbourne and take the verdict of an Antipodean audience before submitting it, as they intend to do next Christmas, to the notice of the playgoers of the world's metropolis. The management apparently considered that the little southern village was not very far behind the old northern one, for all the scenery and appointments to be used, and nearly all the costumes, have been designed and made in Melbourne. . . . *Cinder-Ellen up Too Late* went wonderfully well for a first night's performance. It is one long laugh at the most absurd but irresistible fooling imaginable. The most atrocious puns are constantly introduced, and the whole piece bubbles throughout with ceaseless merriment. Tuneful music, graceful dances, and beautiful costumes are in profusion, and the audience scarcely realise when the curtain falls on the *finale* that some three hours have been spent without feeling anything of weariness or satiety. The part of the servant gives ample scope to Mr.

Fred Leslie for the display of his quaint acting and innumerable oddities. As usual, he assumes various disguises, one being a startlingly lifelike 'counterfeit presentment' of Mr. Snazelle. Another amusing surprise for the audience was his materialisation in the shape of an old woman from a basket of oranges which formed a portion of 'Cinder-Allen's' costermonger's barrow."

Miss Nellie Farren says that the Princess's Theatre, Melbourne, at which they were playing, is the finest she has ever seen. It is situated almost in front of the Houses of Parliament, and hon. members of both Chambers make no scruple about tripping across the road whenever dulness descends on the legislative halls. Indeed, a Government Whip is reported on one occasion to have rubbed his hands and exclaimed with glee, "Delighted to hear that the Gaiety company is coming. Now I'll know where to pick up a quorum at any hour."

From the continual references in the newspapers it would seem that the presence of the Gaiety company was the sensation of the town both at Melbourne and Sydney. Advertisers even turned it to account in manner following :

"Parents may safely leave their infants at home whilst they go to hear Ellen Farren and Fred Leslie if they provide a supply of the Gold-Medal Milk during their absence."

The company opened in Sydney on Sept. 24th for six weeks, playing *Ruy Blas* until October 3rd

and then producing *Cinder-Ellen*. The result was the same as at Melbourne—a furious success, and all the newspapers were loud in their praises. Fred Leslie informed a Sydney reporter that Miss Farren and himself might be fully expected to visit Australia again in three years' time. Explaining the production of *Cinder-Ellen* in Melbourne, he said that the new piece gave a certain distinction and *éclat* to the Australian tour which it would not otherwise have possessed.

“Having found Australian playgoers particularly discriminating, we were tempted to test the merits of *Cinder-Ellen*, for we are satisfied that the verdict of your audiences would be ratified for good or evil in London. In our new burlesque we follow the plan which proved so successful in *Miss Esmeralda*, of giving form and coherence to the story, for I should explain that we are freer here to develop our ideas than in London, where the management and stage managers insist at rehearsal in shaping the burlesque solely with a view to ‘funniments,’ and continually cut short our thread of interest under the belief that the audience are better pleased by a continual skirmish of wit and rattle of puns. *Cinder-Ellen* was a tremendous success in Melbourne, and if Sydney approves of it we shall hope to stage it in London untouched, upon the strength of its cordial reception here.”

The following is from a letter dated

“AUSTRALIAN HOTEL, SYDNEY, 19/9/'91.

“We gave two performances of *Cinder-Ellen* the last day in Melbourne (receipts topp'd £500), and of course I had to go

on, in response to an unanimous call, to say how gratified we all felt that Melbourne had stamped a burlesque intended for London with the seal of success, and that with the favourable opinion of so discriminating an audience we had no doubt whatever of its ultimate chances in London. Tom, it is really



MR. CHAS. DANBY AS SIR
LUDGATE HILL

an awfully pretty piece, and is bound to play to great business at home.

"We often wish you could pop in and see how well *Cinder* goes. What do you think *our piece* cost to produce? No! guess again! £3000! So you can imagine how well it's done. Covent Garden *lives*—real horses, *stage strewn with property cabbage leaves*, all in the dear old (wish we could see it now) Duke of Mudford's best style. Raynham's banquet arrangement in scene 1 is an eye-opener. . . . I have a good song—'Bright Little Glass'—which will knock 'em in town. Riding habit *pas de deux* the big dancing hit, altho' dances in school-room go like wildfire. Nelly's first song and dance and school song very big. . . . Burlesque plays under three hours. . . . Got into trouble through hitting a man t'other night.

Receiver of knocks is suing me for £500 damages. Sydney is crazy over our visit, and doesn't want to let us go. . . .—FRED."

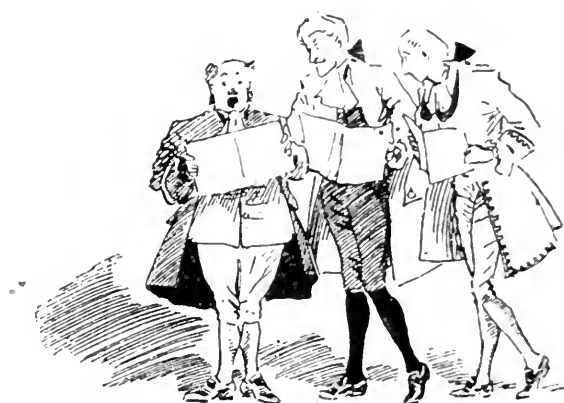
The "trouble" referred to in this letter was due to Fred's loyalty. Hearing another man say something in disparagement of the Prince of

Wales, he thought it no less than a duty to defend the fair name of his prince and patron. The other man resented his championship, and somehow it came about that Leslie lost his usual self-control, and took upon himself the responsibility of chastisement. The consequence was a process of law which required him to leave security for damages and costs when he left the



TRIO: "THE MOON HAS GOT
HIS TROUSERS ON"

(DANBY, LESLIE, AND STOREY)



"GO ON WITH THE ORATORIO!"

colony, but eventually, some twelve months afterwards, he was induced to settle the matter by paying the costs only, which came to £115. His legal adviser in Australia told him that if he could have gone into court he would have won the case, but that, under the circumstances, a compromise was the wisest course to pursue.

One day at the theatre in Sydney, Fred picked up a slip of paper signed by Miss Sylvia Grey,

and containing the words, "You must come to dinner with me on Sunday, dress or no dress." It was a note which she had sent to Miss Nellie Farren, who had excused herself on the plea that a swollen hand would prevent her from dressing.



DOWN THE GRAVE TRAP

Of course Leslie knew or guessed the explanation, for he too was to be one of the dinner-party, but he resolved to have a little pleasantry over the incident. He wrote a letter in a feigned hand to the young lady, making it appear that her note had fallen into the hands of a masher who had been fascinated by her in England and had followed her to Australia in the hope of finding her less surrounded by admirers. He professed to be enchanted by her invitation, and announced his intention of attending in full evening dress. "Your devoted slave, ALGERNON JONES," was the end of it. Miss Grey soon saw through the trick and guessed its author, but said nothing about it until the evening came and with it the announce-

ment of "Mr. Algernon Jones." "I am not at home to Mr. Algernon Jones," said Miss Grey, loud enough to be heard by Fred on the doormat, but presently he was seen to enter the reception room with a long card upon his breast, inscribed, "Algernon Jones, Esq." That dinner-party was one which Sylvia Grey will never forget.

"One who knew him in Australia," writes :

"When Fred Leslie had finished his engagement in Sydney, Australia, he wished to present to the treasurer of the theatre (Mr. G. L. Goodman) a small present as a souvenir of his visit and a mark of his personal regard. Time was short, as

Fred had to leave by express train in the afternoon ; so he went to Elkington the jeweller, telling him his wish, and requesting, as Mr. Goodman was very busy, that the jeweller would kindly put out on the counter several articles for selection, the value of each not to exceed £8. The larger the articles the better, said Fred, as they would look more important. Spirit decanters, jugs, clocks, and a number of other articles were arrayed on the counter, and then Leslie went to the theatre for Mr. Goodman.

"FRED L.—'Goody, old man, you have been very kind to us all during our visit, and I want you to accept a little present.'



"THAT HAT"

"GOODMAN (interrupting).—'No, Fred, I would not think of it. Just give me a photo with your autograph.'

"F. L.—'I insist, Goody. Come down to Elkington's and select what you please.'

"(F. L. and G. walk towards Elkington's.)

"G. (halting).—'No, Fred. Just your photo ——'

"F. L.—'Nonsense, Goody, come along, there's no time to waste. The train goes in an hour.'

"(They arrive in the shop.)

"F. L.—'Now, Goody, select something from those.'

"GOODMAN.—'No, Fred, I would not take anything so expensive. Just your photo with your autograph.'

"F. L.—'I shall be very much offended if you don't. Come now. I shall miss the train.'

"GOODMAN.—'Well, if I must have something, I won't have one of those handsome articles ; (looking in case on counter and pointing to a gold and jewelled sovereign purse), I'll just have that little thing with "Fred Leslie to Goody" engraved on it.'

"F. L.—'Right! you are, my boy. (To Mr. Elkington the jeweller) Just have that engraved please and send it to Mr. Goodman. (Aside to Mr. Elkington) How much will that be?'

"MR. ELKINGTON (aside).—'Twenty-five pounds.'

"(F. L. pays without moving a muscle.)"

Mr. Fred Storey tells some anecdotes of this Australian trip. Leslie was not only built for an athlete, but had trained in the gymnasium, and he has been described as a neat hand with the gloves. This the nimble Storey, who is also expert in the science, readily testifies. Once in Sydney (Australia) these two were discussing the subject in the company of Mr. Chas. Danby and Mr. Walter Raynham (the deputy director for

Mr. George Edwardes) and agreed to spar three friendly rounds. This they did so thoroughly that both emerged the worse for wear. After rest and refreshment, the point under discussion was renewed, and the exponents of the art proposed to give another illustration in a renewal of the combat, but Mr. Walter Raynham put in his fiat, saying, "No, no, boys; I want you for the show."

Another anecdote connected with Mr. Walter Raynham has been variously told. The facts are these: Raynham was a particularly conscientious and careful manager, and was studious in saving expenses which he thought unnecessary. It was his habit, when appealed to for grants of money, many of which were made for the production of *Cinder-Ellen* in Australia, to take refuge in the excuse that he could do nothing until he had wired to Mr. George Edwardes for instructions. An actor or actress would ask for a new dress, or suggest the acquisition of some stage "property;" the stereotyped reply would be, "I cannot do it until I ask Mr. George Edwardes;" and, as the telegraphic rates between Australia and England were rather prohibitive, the objection was usually held to be fatal. One day Fred met Raynham in the street and said to him, "I had a rather curious dream about you this morning." "Oh," said Raynham, much interested. "Yes," continued

Fred, "I thought two burglars got into my bedroom through the front window and tried to steal a case of jewels. I jumped out of bed and followed the fellows out of the window. One bolted, but I clutched the one who had the diamonds, and he fell. He was fighting me, all ends up, when you passed, and I shouted, "Raynham, old man, lend me a hand!" "Which of course I did, old fellow," interrupted Raynham. "Not at all," replied Leslie. "You just shook your head and said, 'My dear boy, I cannot do it until I have asked Mr. George Edwardes.'"

CHAPTER XXVI

HOME AGAIN

*Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand.*

LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

To the end of the Australian tour the new burlesque was carried along on a perpetual flood of success, and the laudations of both press and the public were without bounds. The *Sydney Morning Herald* ascribed the triumphs to

" the skill with which the authors have contrived a new part for Miss Farren, who, full of humour in her novel skirt character as a species of burlesque Good-for-nothing Nan, played her part with unfailing chic and vivacity."

And, just as the queen of burlesque was at the height of her glory, she was smitten and cast down. A rheumatic affection which had troubled her for a year or more, developed with intense violence. For a night or two, loth to leave her beloved stage, she



MR. G. MUSGROVE
(THE AUSTRALIAN
MANAGER)

struggled bravely through her work, but the disorder strengthened, and she became utterly prostrate. For the last performances of *Cinder-Ellen* in Australia her part had to be taken by an understudy, and the doctors advised that the only hope of improving her health was a long rest such as she might have on the voyage home. Accordingly the return journey was booked in the French Messageries Maritimes Mail-boat *Polynesian*, which reached Marseilles about November 22nd, when Leslie wrote :

“ PAQUEBOT ‘POLYNESIAN,’ 22 / 11 / 91.

“ Nellie's indisposition is unfortunately only too permanent, as three week's rest in a deck chair has not effected a cure of what we are compelled to style under a French flag ‘La Goutte.’ We are anchoring our hopes (observe the nauticality) on a little ‘terra firma’ to rid her of the fiend, and I fervently pray they may be realised, or a heart-broken little lady will hobble into England.”

A few days' stay in the Riviera brought poor Nellie a little change of scene, but no change of health, and, impatient to be home, she gave her companions no rest until she was once more in London. There she seemed to improve, and she was full of hope that a few weeks longer would see her restored and treading the old familiar boards at the Gaiety.

When Miss Farren was ill in Australia, Fred did most of her correspondence, and continued to

act as her secretary in London. Miss Sylvia Grey, who has been for years the bosom friend of "the Gaiety Nellie," cherishes a letter which she received from her, but in Leslie's hand. It was after the company had returned, and ran as follows :

"My darling Sylvia (this term of endearment is from Nelly),—I was so sorry to hear of your illness, and hope you will soon pull through. Alas! as you say, I am not likely to foot it for months yet. I start for Tunbridge Wells on Sunday, and hope the change and the waters will shift the cursed rheumatism. With best wishes for your speedy recovery, believe me, my dear Sylvia (still from Nelly), yours affectionately ('Fred' crossed out), ELLEN FARREN."

Fred was apt at brief correspondence, and many of his letters are no longer than the following :

"GAIETY, Saturday.

"Tom,—Holborn ; chop ; 6.

"FRED."

or :

"Saturday. Call. Stage-door, 2.—F."

On photographs he was accustomed to write quaint inscriptions. His portrait being wanted by Mr. Clement Scott for publication in the *Theatre*, he sent his photograph with this dedication :

"FRED LESLIE. His first appearance in this *Theatre*."



MISS KATE JAMES AS CINDER-ELLEN

On a photograph which he considered a very poor likeness, he wrote :

“Latest addition to the Chamber of Horrors—a swearing likeness of Fred Leslie, murderer of the photographer.”

Mr. Raynham, having staged *Cinder-Ellen* in Australia, was commissioned to rehearse the London production, and nothing—nothing but some promise of Miss Farren's appearance—was wanting to ensure a repetition of the Antipodean experience. But as the appointed day drew near, and hopes of Nellie's ability to present herself to her worshippers were fast waning, the possible consequences of her absence began to be realised, and the prospects of the burlesque, which might have been accepted on account of the talent employed upon it, were felt to be severely handicapped by the absence of its chief divinity. However, the best possible substitute was provided in Miss Kate James, a clever and vivacious actress, well known and deservedly popular, and on Christmas Eve, a very trying date, *Cinder-Ellen* made her first bow at the Gaiety Theatre. *Cinder-Ellen minus Ellen* was a word of bad omen, but everybody hoped and did for the best.

The following was the cast of characters :

CINDER-ELLEN UP TOO LATE.

Cinder-Ellen	Miss KATE JAMES.
Linconzina	Miss SYLVIA GREY.
Fettalana	Miss FLORENCE LEVEY.
Mrs. Kensington Gore . .	Miss EMILY MILLER.
Lord Taplow	Miss MAUD HOBSON.
Lord Eastbourne	Miss BLANCHE MASSEY.

Lord Soho	Miss HETTY HAMER.
Lord Whitefriars	Miss DUNVILLE.
Sir Peterborough Court	Miss MAUD BOYD.
Sir Waterloo Bridge	Miss NORTON.
Catherina	Miss LILLIAN PRICE.
Grazina	Miss MAUD WILMOT.
Furnivalzina	Miss VIOLET MONCKTON.
Griffina	Miss EVA GREVILLE.
Templina	Miss ADELAIDE ASTOR.
Victorina	Miss LILY M'INTYRE.
Prince Belgravia	Mr. E. J. LONNEN.
Sir Ludgate Hill	Mr. ARTHUR WILLIAMS.
Peckham and }	} Mr. HARRIS.
Gnorwood }	} Mr. WALKER.
Footman	Mr. HILL.
A servant	Mr. FRED LESLIE.

In this arrangement Mr. Lonnen succeeded Mr. Storey as "Prince Belgravia," and Mr. Williams took Mr. Danby's place as "Sir Ludgate Hill," but these proved to be only temporary substitutions.

The play was handsomely mounted, and everything went smoothly, but there was much doubt behind the curtain at the finish as to how the critics would take the piece. Leslie was emphatic in his belief that they would "slate" it, and found excuses for them as usual in the triviality and want of purpose which characterised the production, the object of which, being only to amuse, was not understood by the literary world of London as it was in New York or Melbourne. However, the thought gave him no sadness, for he declared his invariable experience to be that

the more a Gaiety burlesque was condemned by the men of light and leading, the more it pleased the public, and the more it filled the treasury. These views were discussed and controverted, and Leslie was in a minority; the prevalent opinion being that the press verdict would be favourable,



MR. LONNEN AS PRINCE BELGRAVIA

and that on the whole, praise was preferable to censure, come whence it may. The first point was soon settled. The morning papers came out as usual on Christmas Day, and such persons as had been building hopes upon a friendly criticism were able to rejoice only at one fact, and that the fact of its being the 25th of December, the day upon which, of all the days of the year, the

circulation of the papers is the slowest. Not that the notices were cruel, or even severe. As a rule they were couched in sorrow rather than in anger, and made the culprits feel that they had been



MISS FLORENCE LEVEY
AS FETTALANA

gently and kindly admonished for their misconduct and discharged with a caution. Most of the writers charitably ascribed shortcomings to the absence of Miss Farren, and it was rightly added that the introduction even of such able artists as Messrs. Lonn and Williams scarcely compensated for the loss of the actors for whom their parts were specially written. As was afterwards seen, Mr. Danby's peculiar method made his "Sir Ludgate Hill" one of his finest impersonations, and Mr. Storey's "Prince

Belgravina" fitted him to perfection. Events also proved *Cinder-ElLEN* to be one of the most popular and profitable of Gaiety investments, and it is therefore needless to repeat all that was said of its initial performances. The following couple of criticisms from opposite points of view may be offered as samples. The source of the first will not be named :

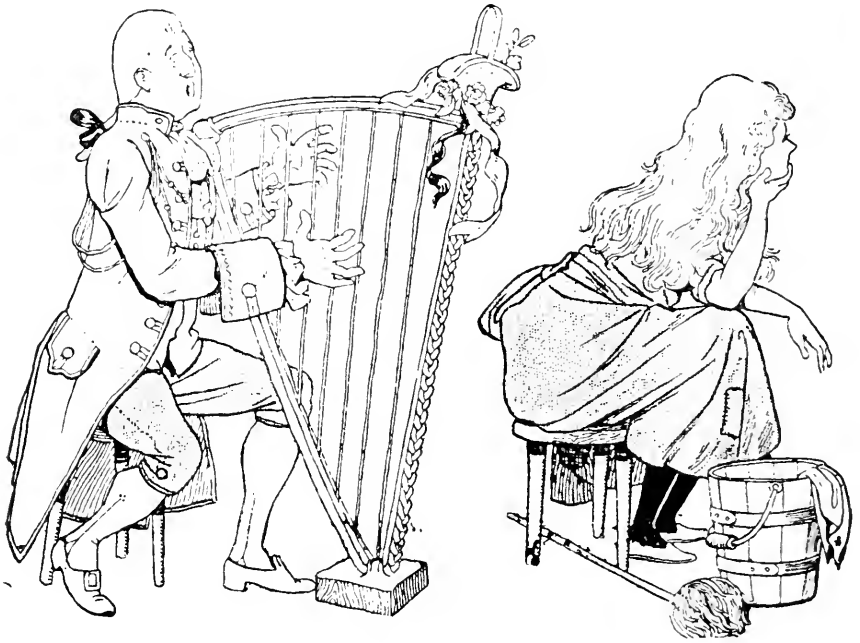
"Are there degrees of comparison in Gaiety burlesque, which has now well-nigh petrified into a fixed type? If so, *Cinder-Ellen*, by Messrs. A. C. Torr and W. T. Vincent, must be pronounced one of the very worst of its kind. A superabundance of trashy dialogue, jokes almost as flat as those of the judicial bench, and a crowd of damsels with fine figures and expensive dresses, but apparently without a spark of



MR. LONNEN AND MR. DANBY. "WHICH IS THE WAY TO THE BAR?"

intelligence or a spice of humour in their composition. These, together with an ostensibly deliberate effort on the part of the authors to vulgarise a poetic nursery tale, are the most conspicuous features of the new Gaiety entertainment. What fun there is comes mainly from mechanical devices—*e.g.*, a trick staircase down which Mr. Fred Leslie is sent tobogganning, a window through which Mr. Lonnen in Bacchic frenzy is sent crashing, a coster's barrow which propels itself about the stage,

and a violin with a movable neck which plays the violinist strange pranks. Miss Sylvia Grey is still at hand to poetise petticoat dancing, and several less bewitching ladies are there to reduce it to doggerel. The principals are at present quite unprovided with parts. Mr. Lonnen has once more to make what fun is still to be made out of intoxication. Mr. Arthur Williams has to perambulate the stage with the one catch-word, 'Which is the way to the bar?' and the whole burden of



THE HARP SONG

the evening has practically to be borne by Mr. Fred Leslie. It must be allowed that this versatile mimic, singer, and true artist is more than equal to the task. Miss Ellen Farren is still on the sick-list, and the title of the burlesque thus loses what little point it ever possessed; but the lady's place is admirably filled by Miss Kate James, who acts no less buoyantly, and sings much more tunefully, than the absentee. On the whole, however, *Cinder-Ellen* is a woefully dismal production."

The following was written by the ever-kind critic of the *Daily Telegraph*:

"There was a fixed determination last night to be jolly under any circumstances. A 'never say die' spirit animated audience and artists alike. With King Fog and King Frost engaged in deadly combat outside, it was a wonder that any one had a vestige of a voice, but they bravely rallied to the attack; the bells in the Strand were cheerily ringing in Christmas, so the Gaiety boys determined that there should be no frost inside the theatre, at any rate. Thus it was that, full of goodwill to all concerned, the audience straggled in and eventually settled down to the new burlesque, *Cinder-Ellen up Too Late*, written by A. C. Torr and W. T. Vincent, a burlesque that has had the honour of being performed in the Colonies before it was seen in England. As might be expected on such a night, there were a few gaps in the ranks. Necessity, but certainly not will, compelled many old friends to be classed as absentees. Still, those who had braved the cheerless atmosphere were not lacking in enthusiasm. The first old favourite to be called for and cheered to the echo was Herr Meyer Lutz. The instant the familiar face was seen issuing from the orchestra door there was a shout. Herr Lutz has sat at that desk ever since 1868, from the birth of the Gaiety, and he well deserved his Christmas congratulations. There is only one left who has been as consistently faithful to the Gaiety as Meyer Lutz, and that is Miss Nelly Farren, who, unfortunately, was the one important missing guest on this very evening on which she could least be spared. The burlesque was hers—there could only by any possibility be one 'Cinder-Ellen'—the expected triumph was hers, bouquets and banners were awaiting her; but she was a prisoner at home, and could not answer to the call. Miss Farren must be ill indeed to be compelled to decline such a cordial invitation, and everywhere sympathy was felt for the lost favourite. But

with that good taste and generosity so characteristic of an English audience, every one seemed determined to make Miss Kate James at home, and to let her feel that every one



MR. F. LESLIE

"BRIGHT LITTLE GLASS"

appreciated the extreme difficulty of her position. She was received with those encouraging cheers which mean so much to a sensitive artist, and from that moment failure was impossible. But when Mr. Fred Leslie appeared laden with boxes and knick-knacks, in the character of the Prince's valet, then there was no further need for hesitation, and the play literally stood still in order that there should be no mistake about the greeting to this delightful artist in his double character of author and actor.

"Mr. Fred Leslie was at his best. His voice was in rare order, his humour sharpened to its finest point, and everything was done with consummate and characteristic ease. The success of the evening was made by a song introduced by Mr. Leslie—a song of infinite tenderness and pathos which will soon travel from the stage to the salon.

It is a romantic pleading of a man who looks in the glass and chides time in a fanciful and fantastic manner, half playful, half serious. Mr. Leslie sang it in a style in which he can have few rivals. Every word was distinctly pronounced, every inflection properly made: it was a revival of the old style of ballad-

singing, and in the despised amusement known as burlesque, thanks to the power of art, many were discovered to be wiping away a furtive tear; and this leads one to the remark that *Cinder-Ellen* is far more of a light comic opera than many of its predecessors. It contains no horseplay or vulgarity. Of course there are comic songs. Why not? The more the merrier. Mr. Lonnen sings a lively lilting tune, 'What will you have to drink?' with a capital chorus for the girls. This is bound to be popular, and is the work of a capable musician; and to Mr. Lonnen's share also falls a valse measure, 'I'll teach you to waltz,' which was repeated three times. The scene that appeared to be most appreciated was a parody of the girls'-school scene in *School*, and a faint imitation of the girls' convent singing-class in the *Little Duke*. Here Mr. Leslie is the Professor, admirably made up; and, luckily, the fact that Miss Sylvia Grey and Miss Florence Levey are school-mistresses does not prevent them from



MISS KATE JAMES

dancing charmingly before the pupils break up for the holidays. Miss Sylvia Grey joins in a comic *pas de deux* with Mr. Lonnen, but she should be allowed to have a poetic dance all to herself. There is no such graceful dancer on the stage of to-day. The celebrated *pas de quatre* has been extended into a *pas de six*, and the young ladies were somewhat sombrely attired this time, with olive-green shot dresses heavily encumbered with black, black head-dresses, black trimmings, black gloves, black stockings. Miss Kate James got through her work wonderfully well. She was bright, gay, and full of fun; she sang well and danced well, and will soon be able to follow Mr. Leslie's clever lead. For he is the most inventive of actors. One bit of business leads to another; he is never at rest. Miss Emily Miller joined the

Gaiety company to play an old crabbed schoolmistress, and the stately and beautiful band was headed by Miss Maud Hobson, Miss Blanche Massey, Miss Hetty Hamer, *cum multis aliis* of this magnificent pattern. Neither Mr. Arthur Williams nor Mr. E. J. Lonnen were as funny as usual, but the weather was enough to knock the fun out of a popular clown on Boxing Night. Every possible compliment was paid to the artists, and, if we mistake not, in a few nights' time *Cinder-Ellen* will be worked up into one of the most graceful and amusing



AT CINDER-ELLEN'S DESK

entertainments of a long and successful series. Not to spare an evening to see Fred Leslie is wilfully to neglect the study of one of the most accomplished and versatile artists of the day. None but himself can be his parallel."

The newspapers indeed were almost unanimous on the point of Leslie's excellence in this the latest (and unhappily the last) of his creations. The *Standard* said :

"The facetious comedian proves himself to be a true artist. No actor is more expert at sudden and mirth-provoking tricks than Mr. Leslie, but he has higher qualities, and, in his disguise of a professor, he sings a really admirable and pathetic

ballad, in which he laments his lost youth. The song could not have been given with more feeling."

And the *Times* commented thus :

"Mr. Leslie's system is not to write dialogue, but to invent 'business,' and then, if we may adopt a strangely perverted locution which finds currency on the other side of the foot-lights, to put 'sense' to it. He is certainly a pantomimist of extraordinary resource, as well as of unflagging energy."



THE INK DRINK

The *Echo*, in a critical article, remarked :

"But Mr. Fred Leslie is the same Mr. Fred Leslie as of yore, only more so—polished, easy, Protean, unexpected, inimitable—whether as a flunkey tumbling downstairs to arise out of his own *débris* an Australian prize-fighter, or as the inevitable costermonger, or as old Dominie in a school-room, or as a fascinating romantic balladist, or as a splendid prince all in white."

The *Illustrated London News* had this unstinted testimony :

"Mr. Fred Leslie is the modern Atlas at the Gaiety. He is carrying the world on his shoulders. What an artist he is !

How ready, how inventive, how brimming over with fun, how appreciative of sentiment. I don't really remember a similar artistic temperament to that of Mr. Leslie. We have had some of his gifts in actors and some in singers, but never combined. It is like a Leigh Murray or a Sothern with the sympathetic voice and touch of a drawing-room tenor. You should hear

him sing the song to the mirror, and then you will be doubly impressed with his rare artistic gifts. He is far more than a comic actor, or a droll, or a facial contortionist; he is a true artist. But just now he is comparatively alone, with the exception of Miss Sylvia Grey, who has brains, and exercises them even in burlesque.

Truth said :

"Leslie performed wonders, and his trip to Australia has done him an immense deal of good. His voice is better and richer, and his comedy is more polished.

THE PROFESSOR IN SLIPPERS



. . . . On the variety stage there has been no such artist as Leslie in our time. . . . For alacrity, variety, and inventiveness, for bright humour and suggested pathos, Fred Leslie is without a rival. If any one doubts his pathetic vein, let them hear him sing the ballad to the hand-mirror in this very play. If a Frenchman were to come over here and do it only half so well, we should be raving about him. I sometimes think that the exceptional talent of this young artist is wasted on the burlesque stage. He should

be the star of comic opera, but Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan *cum multis aliis*, have elected to pass him by."

In reference to the point here touched, the biographer of Fred Leslie may say, upon Leslie's



MR. FRED LESLIE POSING AS MR. GLADSTONE
(STEREOSCOPIC COMPANY)

own authority, that his friendship with the fathers of the *Pinafore* series of operas was close and reciprocal, but that, although there was once a proposal that he should join the company at the avoy, it was by a kind of mutual arrangement that he kept in a different groove. There was a

time undoubtedly when he would have been glad enough to seek fame and fortune under the Gilbert-Sullivan and Carte administration, but after he had reached a position which gave him a perfect freedom of action upon the stage, it was felt on both sides that the rigid discipline which



FRED LESLIE AND KATE JAMES

is so essential to the Gilbertian system would have been irksome to the artist and incompatible with a full development of his powers. Beyond this consideration had been of late years his affection for the Gaiety Theatre, and the determination of the management to make his engagement

continuous. He could not have hoped for more liberal treatment anywhere else, and his popularity with the patrons of the theatre could not possibly have been surpassed.

Speaking of his reception in the burlesque under notice, the *People* testified that :

“No one can conceive a heartier or more prolonged greeting than that given to this wisest player of the fool upon our stage.”

The sad chord of the event was struck by many reviewers, as, for instance, in the words of the *St. James's Gazette* :

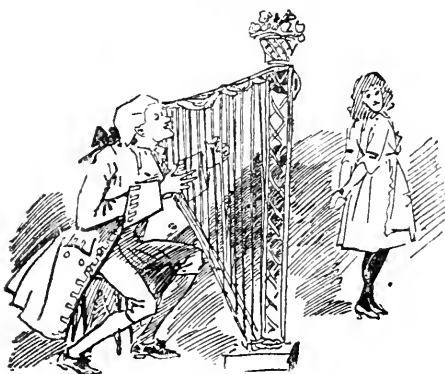
“Even more depressing than the fog and cold which crept into the theatre, was the knowledge that Miss Nellie Farren, for whom a cordial reception had been prepared, could not appear owing to severe illness. Time after time kindly allusions, bearing upon her return to the scene of her former triumphs, fell from the lips of the actors - only to be received in solemn silence.”



MR F. LESLIE AND MISS KATE JAMES

What the attractions of the burlesque would have been with the original “Cinder-Ellen” in her place can only be surmised. Even without her it drew crowded audiences nightly, and the Gaiety continued to be one of the theatres best patronised all through and beyond the holiday season. It was, however, imperatively necessary to shorten the burlesque, and Mr. George Edwardes took the drastic measure of cutting absolutely out of it the whole of the second act, thereby reducing it from three acts to two. The

second act was occupied in the pursuit of the fugitives, and the scene was laid in Covent



THE HARP SONG

Garden Market. The introduction of a few words in the first and last acts made sufficient amends for the omission, and the most regrettable loss was the Coster duet, "Come all you illustrious buyers," which had a very pretty

air and action, in which the two runaways and their barrow had an equal share.

Leslie unquestionably laboured with redoubled ardour to make some amends for the absence of Miss Farren, and succeeded in grasping the attention of the audience at his very entrance by one of his most wonderful tricks. This was the fall down stairs, which may be cited as an instance of



THE DANGER SIGNAL

his confidence in his own judgment, for it was introduced by him in the face of constant

reminders that "trick stairs" had been used over and over again. He felt sure that the novelty of the accompanying business would justify the introduction of an old effect. To see the smart-looking servant ascend the stairs laden with luggage, and then to see him stripped and torn to rags after the "chute," was to see one of the cleverest of his many devices for the creation of surprise and laughter. The metamorphosis was effected by a careful preparation of his costume. His sleeves, boots, etc., were released in the act of falling by the pull of a lace, and his coat was merely fastened together by strips of paper which easily broke in the descent. If any one had carefully watched this marvellous slide, it would have been seen that the apparent struggles of the falling man were really a series of preconcerted movements to get rid of his clothing.

The burlesque had been produced but a few weeks when the nation was saddened by that most lamentable affliction, the death of Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence. The young Prince was at the Gaiety Theatre on the 28th of December, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, and thoroughly enjoyed the performance of *Cinder-ElLEN up Too Late*, laughing heartily at a small joke made at his expense by Mr. Leslie. That was the last visit paid to a place of entertainment by

the promising young Duke of Clarence. Less



THE FALL DOWNSTAIRS

than three weeks later there was sorrow in every British heart, and a spontaneous outburst of affec-

tionate sympathy with the Royal house in the deep grief attending the loss of a beloved son.

Such a calamity could not fail to have a depressing effect upon the theatres, especially such as were given up to frivolity, and the Gaiety bookings naturally fell off. This was a crisis which called for energetic action, and among the other means employed to strengthen the attractions was the fortunate engagement of Miss Lottie Collins on her release from the pantomime at the Grand, Islington. For her introduction, Fred suggested the interpolation of a few lines

accounting for her appearance at the wedding party in the palace scene, and hinted that her connection with the Tivoli and Pavilion might be worked into a running reference to a tiff *au lait*; but it was ultimately decided that the lady should simply explain that she came "through the *Grand Pavilion* posi-*Tivoli*."

That strange song, "Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay," which she was mainly instrumental in making famous, raged throughout



"YOU SHOULDN'T HA' STARED SO."

the land like a plague, and everybody burned to see and hear its exposition.

Mr. Clement Scott essayed to describe it as follows :

“The success of Miss Lottie Collins and her song is due to



THE TYPE-WRITTEN LETTER

those strong elements of dramatic success—surprise and contrast. She begins the strange wail with as much taste and expression as Schneider gave to ‘Dites Lui,’ or as Kate Vaughan showed in her trifling little ditties. Indeed, in her movements, the wave of the pocket handkerchief, and the trembling voice, she reminds many of Kate Vaughan in days gone by. Voice, action, gesticulation are all in harmony.

But then comes the surprise. Bang goes the drum, and the quiet, simple-looking, nervous singer is changed into a bacchanalian fury. But the frenzy is never allowed to stray beyond the limits of art. Singer and dancer are well in hand. Wild and wilder as the refrain grows, half-maddened as the dancer seems to become, no one could reasonably detect one trace of vulgarity or immodesty in a single movement."

The following is a sample of the song, and this, with the



A DUET (MISS K. JAMES
AND MR. F. LESLIE)



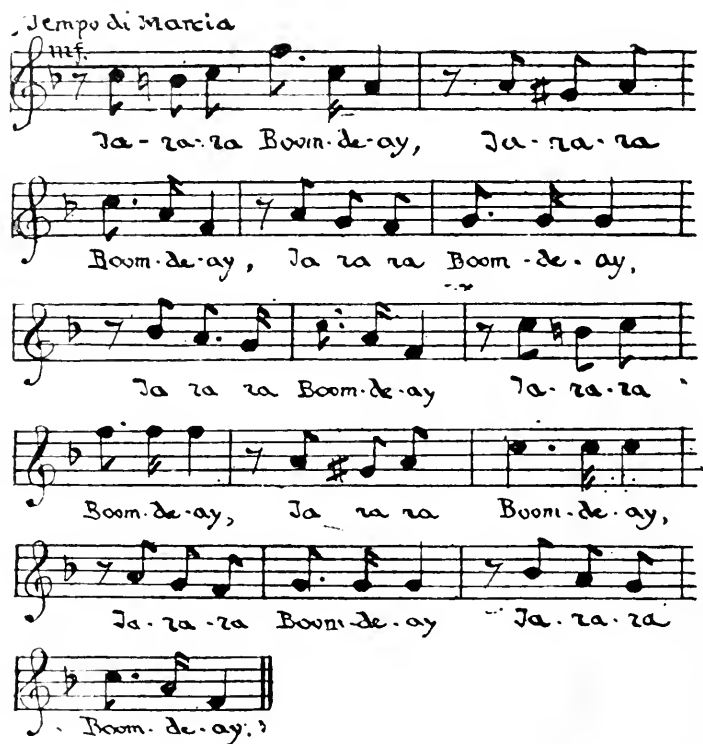
MISS LOTTIE COLLINS
("TA-RA-RA BOOM-DE-AY")

music of the refrain, may tell to posterity the sort of melody which enchanted England in 1892 :

I'm a timid flower of innocence—
Pa says that I have no sense,—
I'm one eternal big expense ;
The boys say that I'm just immense !

Ere my verses I conclude,
 I'd like it known and understood,
 Though free as air, I'm never rude—
 I'm not too bad, and not too good!
 Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay.

Sung eight times thus :



The effect of this song upon the Gaiety was immense. The receipts went up with a rush, and, what was still more satisfactory, they never went down again. People who would not have thought of going to a music-hall, or even to see a burlesque, repaired to the Gaiety from curiosity to hear the song and see the songstress, and, finding

Fred Leslie and his fellow mummers to their liking, went again and often. The return of Mr. Charles Danby to the part of Sir Ludgate Hill during a temporary indisposition of Mr. Williams, was also of advantage to the play, and when Mr. Lonnen went to Australia soon afterwards, Mr. Fred Storey was enabled to add his



MR. F. STOREY



MISS HOLMES

extraordinary dancing to the other attractions of the piece. Before *Cinder-Ellen* had run many weeks at the Gaiety, it was acknowledged on all hands that it had "come to stay," and when it was two months old there were ample assurances of a long and flourishing career. Miss

Maria Jones, an old Gaiety favourite, was introduced after a time to play the part of Mrs. Kensington Gore, but she

did not long remain, and Miss Holmes, who represented the character in Australia, and was physically adapted to fit it, was brought again into the cast, and so remained. The excision of the second act, which was a daring operation, was found to strengthen the burlesque very materially, but a short introductory piece was required to fill



MESSRS. STOREY AND DANBY SHAKE HANDS

up time, and Messrs. H. & E. Harraden's comedietta of *That Lady in Pink*, was played for a while by Mr. G. T. Minshull and Miss Linda Verner, replaced later by a sentimental two-act play, called *Queer Street*, written by Mr. "Richard-Henry," with Messrs. Minshull, Bantock, Hill, and Walker, Miss Ethel Blenheim and Miss Louie Wilmot in the cast. To this eventually succeeded a pathetic sketch named *The Snowstorm*,

in which Mr. Minshull and Miss Maggie Roberts alone appeared.

In the month of May, Miss Kate James transferred her talents to the Tivoli, Pavilion, and other music halls, and the title rôle of "*Cinder-Ellen*" was bestowed upon another popular idol, Miss Letty Lind, who held it during the remainder of the run both in town and country.

On Saturday, July 6th, in the height of its prosperity, *Cinder-Ellen* bade farewell to London for three months. At the close of the performance, Mr. Leslie was called upon for a "speech," and read a telegram in these words from Miss Farren :

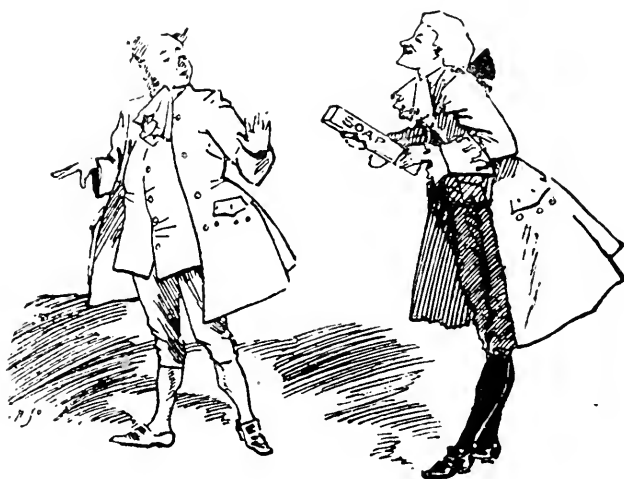
"Congratulations to all on the prosperity of *Cinder-Ellen*. Am looking forward hopefully to the time when I shall appear before my kind friends. Am much better."

Leslie added the announcement that he was to return in September to play his last three months at the Gaiety Theatre. This referred to the intention he then had of entering into management. That intention was afterwards altered, but the words, alas, were prophetic!

If he had been spared a year or two longer, there is no doubt whatever that he would have been seen in the management of a London theatre, for it was constantly before his eyes, and, although he had been induced by the liberality of the Gaiety directors to renew his term there for a

further period, he repeatedly announced his resolution to free himself from all managements but his own, and start on a new and independent career. When warned of the hazard connected with managerial ventures, he said :

“My dear fellow, I have thought all that out. If the worst comes to the worst, and I make a failure, I have youth on my side, and can always get another engagement.”



“GOOD MORNING”—MR. F. LESLIE AND MR. C. DANBY

The “provincial” tour commenced, by a stretch of the term, at the Grand Theatre, Islington, where many London playgoers pursued their favourites. Mr. Frank Parker, who had stage-managed the play at the Gaiety, remained behind, and Mr. Minshull performed the like duty on tour, being also ready to act as Leslie’s understudy in case of any emergency. The general management of the tour was in the hands of Mr.

F. J. Harris, and the full strength of the company was taken round.

That the service which Mr. Parker had rendered to the production in London was appreciated may be gathered from the following notice which appeared in *Sala's Journal*, and in other forms in other papers :

“ Mr. Frank Parker, the popular stage manager of the Gaiety Theatre, has been the recipient of a handsome solid silver tea and coffee service, as a token of the esteem in which he is held by Messrs. Fred Leslie and W. T. Vincent, joint authors of *Cinder-Ellen up Too Late*. Other authors will please note.”

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LAST TOUR

*One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.*

OLD MORTALITY.

A RULE which was observed for the first time on the tour of 1892, was a strict limit of one-week



"DID YOU THINK I WAS WOLSEY?"

visits, and, although this resulted in certain disappointments in certain towns owing to the public demand being in excess of the supply, it proved, as a financial policy, thoroughly sound. The tour of *Cinder-Ellen* was probably from a pecuniary point the most successful ever made. The shortness of the opportunity whetted beyond doubt the public desire,

and, with rare exceptions, the attendance was everywhere measured by the capacity of the theatre.

Writing from Liverpool on the 11th of August, Leslie said :

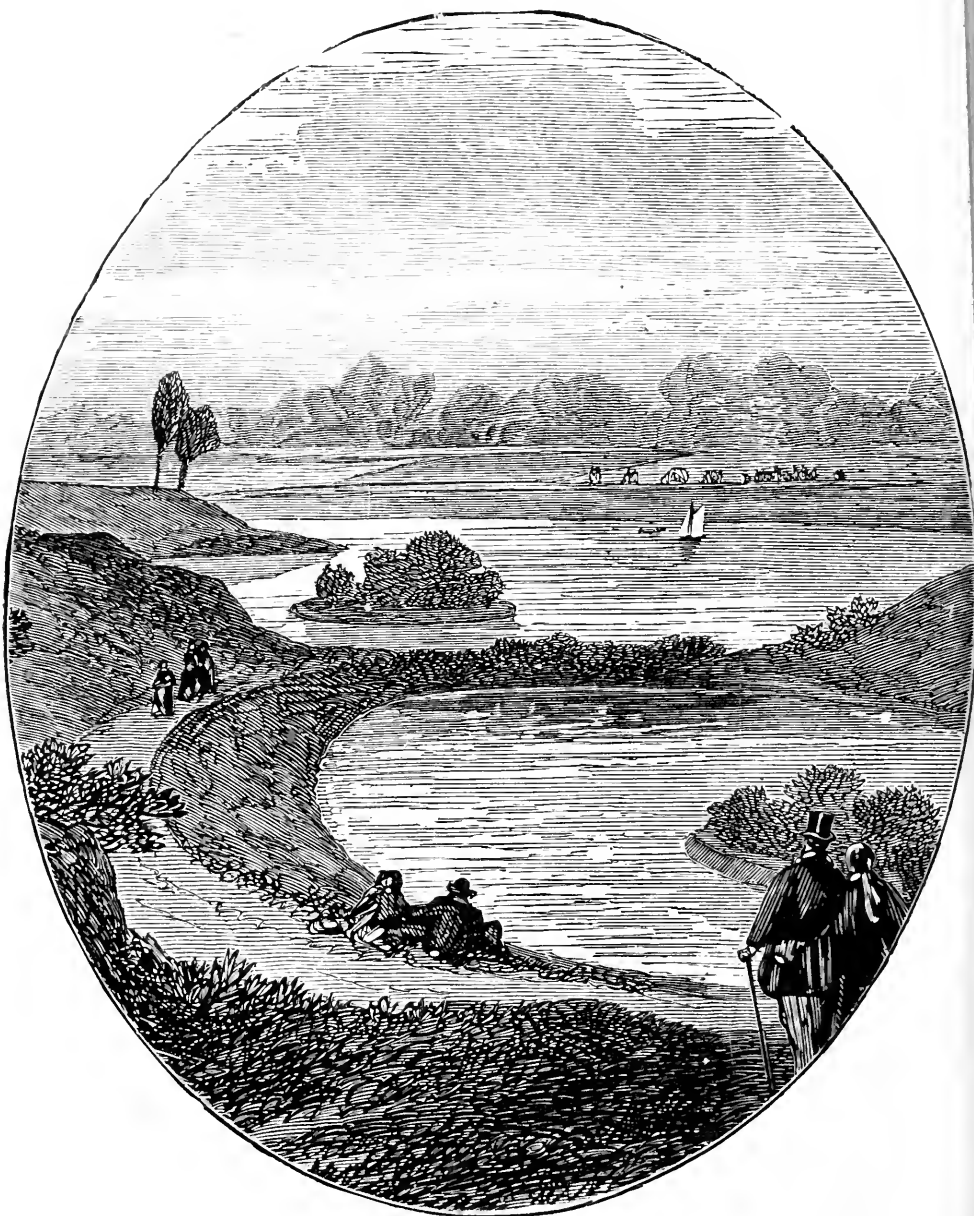
“ *Cinder-ElLEN* is going better and drawing more money than any previous burlesque has done in the provinces.”

He also said to a Liverpool man :

“ The *Liverpool Porcupine* has a critic after my own heart. He says, ‘ I am going to-night for the sixth time this week to see *Cinder-ElLEN*, and if I have one particular desire in life it is to see Nellie Farren play her part in it.’ ‘ That,’ added Fred, ‘ is the wish of my soul.’ ”

The hospitality extended to London artists when on tour has been already referred to, and in none of the towns visited by the Gaiety people was there any lack of friends, the fault if anything lying in the superabundance and kindly attentions of their entertainers. Especially was this the case in the larger towns and cities, where, not only from clubs and theatrical circles, but from many private houses, they were certain of receiving cordial invitations. The circle of acquaintances in Liverpool, Dublin, Manchester, Birmingham, Bradford, Leeds, Newcastle, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, was only less extensive than in London, and much more demonstrative. In no place was the feeling of regard for Leslie more manifest

than in Liverpool, to which place he was greatly



SEFTON PARK, LIVERPOOL

attached, owing especially to the warm friendship which existed between the leading members of

the company and Mr. D. H. Elliott, who has been previously mentioned. On the last tour Leslie and others made Liverpool their headquarters even while playing in Manchester, to and from where they went daily. A favourite spot with our friend, as with most others, was the beautiful Sefton Park, and there were some pleasant well-remembered excursions on the Mersey. Chester also was within reach; at Chester were many friends to meet, and the delightful old, old city never lost its charm. And there was work to do. At the Queen's Hotel, Manchester, during the tour with *Ruy Blas* in 1890, the scheme of *Cinder-ElLEN* was first planned and sketched out, and the last touches were put to the second edition of the same burlesque at Birmingham in September, 1892. At Birmingham, Leslie and other prominent actors have been accustomed on their visits to lodge at a private house in Bath Row belonging to Mrs. Barnett, a good motherly soul well beloved by both sexes of the dramatic profession. She has an album full of contributions from distinguished men and women, and she was devotedly fond of Fred Leslie, whose latest provincial appearance was at the Grand Theatre, Birmingham, on September 17th, 1892. Birmingham was visited twice on this tour—the only town so favoured. On the first occasion the Prince of Wales's was

through which the gentlemen of the orchestra could be seen looking thitherward and marvelling at the commotion. The "Gore-Butts" joke was afterwards tried, but the audience did not seem to see it; so it must have been a bad one.

Talking of trials is a reminder that Leslie always, if possible, tried his more daring experiments in the provinces before essaying them in London. This was not from any disrespect to provincial audiences, nor from any doubt of their intellectual capacity, but simply because if he made a mistake the consequences would not be so lasting or the condemnation so disastrous as a false step might be in town. It was in this way that he felt the pulse of the public in that most audacious of his innovations, the blowing out the moon, which was afterwards introduced with such amusing effect in *Monte Cristo*. He was playing at the time in *Little Jack Sheppard* at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, and before going on the stage one evening, he got the stage-manager to arrange at a signal the sudden extinction of the lights. All being ready, he exclaimed, "I will blow out the moon," gave a puff, and had the satisfaction not only of seeing the trick well done, but of hearing the audience shout with glee. "You will blow out the moon every night now," said the manager. But Fred thought not.

Although he had a high opinion of provincial

playgoers, he, for the reason just stated, would occasionally indulge with them in a few small liberties which he would not attempt in London. For instance, on the last tour, the depression caused by the absence of Miss Nellie Farren was severely felt, and, although the tour of the Gaiety



THE GRAND OLD MAN

Company has been said to have brought in more money than any other tour of the season, the artists engaged in the work felt constrained to use every effort to keep the play from flagging. Thus Leslie and Danby occasionally indulged in a piece of fooling in the country which possibly a London audience would think in questionable taste. After

appearing in a sham private-box placed in one of the wings, they would pass into the theatre and sit in one of the ordinary private boxes, where they would gradually be discovered by the whole audience and create a good deal of diversion by a method which was not quite original nor at all legitimate to the stage, but probably to be excused by its motive and justified by its success. The incident was never introduced at the Gaiety. But *Cinder-Ellen* came back so much strengthened by new business as to be independent of overstrained effects.

The following was the order of the Gaiety tour with *Cinder-Ellen*, showing the dates of opening :

Islington . . .	Grand Theatre	July 11
Brighton . . .	Theatre Royal	„ 18
Birmingham . .	Prince of Wales's Theatre	„ 25
Leeds	Grand Theatre	Aug. 1
Liverpool . . .	Royal Court Theatre	„ 8
Manchester . . .	Theatre Royal	„ 15
Newcastle . . .	Theatre Royal	„ 22
Glasgow	Theatre Royal	„ 29
Edinburgh . . .	Lyceum Theatre	Sept. 5
Birmingham . .	Grand Theatre	„ 12
Islington	Grand Theatre	„ 19

The *Scottish Leader* of September 6th, 1892, reviewed "The Progress of Burlesque," in connection with the production of the latest Gaiety sample at the Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, and said :

"Six years ago Mr. William Archer publicly asked himself

the question, 'Are we advancing?' in matters dramatic. A few years before that, in his 'English Dramatists of To-day,' the same writer had expressed a very gloomy view of the possible, or likely future, of English drama. In 1886 he had become less pessimistic, and, among other things, shook himself warmly by the hand in consequence of 'the decadence of burlesque, balanced by the great popularity of the Gilbert-Sullivan musical extravaganza.' In support of this statement he urged that 'the lower public, avid of mere laughter, has split into two sections, the one sinking to the music halls for its recreation, the other rising to the theatres of farce.' Mr. Archer, being by nature pessimistic, it is not surprising to find that in adopting an optimistic opinion for once, he was not able to see clearly ahead. The old order of burlesque was certainly dying out—nay, it was practically dead and pretty well buried; but, because one form of a particular species of art becomes extinct, there is no reason why another should not rise up out of its ashes and, like the phoenix of old, reign for another five hundred years—or less. As a matter of fact, it was just at the close of 1885 that a new epoch for stage travesty dawned at the Gaiety Theatre, London. Mr. Hollingshead had kept the 'sacred lamp' burning for a long while, but the oil was getting lower and lower; at last it flickered and would have gone out, but for Messrs. Stephens and Yardley, who, through the medium of the new Gaiety Company, gave to the world the burlesque of *Little Jack Sheppard*. It is impossible to give in anything like detail wherein lay all the differences between the new and the old order of things, but one or two points may be noted. The burlesque became the *pièce de résistance*—in fact, generally occupied the entire programme. The music was largely composed and the scenery painted specially for the production, while, in the retrimmed 'sacred flame,' large sums of money, as well as artistic taste, were used upon the dressing of the actors and actresses. Nor were these the only differences. The

reformation initiated by Kate Vaughan in the matter of dancing was splendidly carried on by her successors, so that, instead of the good old-fashioned 'breakdowns,' the choregraphic interludes became marked as features of grace and elegance, and so far has this departure been carried that there is little exaggeration in saying that, perhaps, to the dancing the present popularity of modern burlesque is chiefly due. The most fastidious can find nothing to complain of, while the artistic eye cannot help being charmed. If ever this was true it was so with regard to the production which was placed before the patrons of the Lyceum last night. Every one of the young ladies could dance well and a few exquisitely. Burlesque, however, requires more than merely beauty and grace of motion to give it vital strength, and, whatever the original architect of the edifice may and can do to ensure success, there can be no question that the builders have much to answer for. Our more trivial and fleeting fashions have, generally, but short lives, and of those who care to read between the lines of merriment supplied by *Cinder-Ellen* there must have been few who did not find cause for sadness mingled with their laughter last night. The cue could be taken, in fact, from the programme, which announces the present as the 'farewell appearance of Mr. Fred Leslie in Gaiety burlesque.' Without this tower of strength it can scarcely be expected that the new order of burlesque so brilliantly inaugurated seven years ago, and since maintained, will survive much longer."

Mr. Van Biene, having acquired the provincial rights of *Cinder-Ellen* except as to certain large towns reserved by the Gaiety Company, formed a very efficient company, with Miss Kitty Loftus in the titular part, and carried out a highly successful tour as follows :

Scarborough	.	Londesborough Theatre	.	Aug. 22
York	.	Theatre Royal	.	„ 29
Southport	.	Opera House	.	Sept. 5
Douglas	.	Grand Theatre	.	„ 12
Dublin	.	Leinster Hall	.	„ 19
Hull	.	Theatre Royal	.	„ 26
Huddersfield	.	Theatre Royal	.	Oct. 3
Longton	.	Queen's Theatre	.	„ 10
Birmingham	.	Grand Theatre	.	„ 17
Cheltenham	.	Opera House	.	„ 24
Cardiff	.	Theatre Royal	.	„ 31
Plymouth	.	Theatre Royal	.	Nov. 7
Portsmouth	.	Theatre Royal	.	„ 14
Northampton	.	Opera House	.	„ 21

In the Van Biene version of the burlesque, the two sisters had masculine representatives, and a new character was imported under the name of “Buttons” which afforded an opportunity for the display of the clever drolleries of Mr. Tom Ollives.

Another company meanwhile introduced *Cinder-Ellen* to the colonists of the South African Republic, and had a highly profitable tour.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TWO MONTHS MORE

*What a piece of work is man ! How
Noble in reason ; how infinite in faculties.*—HAMLET.

To strengthen the "second edition" of *Cinder-
Ellen* for re-presentation in London, Leslie
resolved to introduce his own song of "Love in
the Lowther," which he wrote and composed soon
after his marriage. He had sung it many times
at clubs, smoking concerts, and matinées, but it
was still a novelty and a surprise to most of the
audiences who flocked to the theatre. The song,
which was inferior only in vocal display to "The
Language of Love," was first sung in public at a
benefit performance in the theatre of the Alexandra
Palace, Muswell Hill. Mr. J. J. Dallas writes :

"Fred Leslie's clever song 'Love in the Lowther' was the
outcome of mutual chaff when we used to imitate the banjo
and the street corner 'Punch and Judy' against each other,
and he sent me one of the first copies with a gratifying com-
pliment written by him upon it. I had just made a big hit at
the Gaiety and Fred was resting. He wrote :

"'To JACK DALLAS, the coming man, from FRED LESLIE,
the gone coon : 12 / 12 / 82.'"

My tale is of a big boy doll
 In costume rather scanty,*
 Who fell quite head and heels in love
 With a doll in the opposite shanty.

Refrain :

But she longed for higher society,
 He was in much lower grade ;
 For she could say "Mamma," he only (*squeak*),
 And that a great difference made.

2.

His absent gaze was one of love,
 His bosom swelled with fire ;
 He would have winked his eyes above
 But couldn't work the wire.
 Winter's cold blasts he heeded not,
 His tissue-paper covering
 Was all he needed, for his love
 Was true and past all smothering.

3.

No wand'ring 'neath the tree's cool shade
 Her waxy hands to squeeze,
 Their home ancestral an arcade
 Where music swelled the breeze.
 The humming top (*imitation*) they loved to hear
 As the cuckoo chimed the hour
 With its "cuckoo" (*imitation*) "cuckoo, cuckoo" dear
 Beneath their glassy bower.

* Altered to—

Whose blue eyes did admire
 Miss Dolly, seated at a stall
 Some two or three doors higher.

4.

At night he would be put to bed
In a cardboard box so jolly,
Not heeding the price marked on the lid,
To dream of his fair dolly.
Then, rising slowly, he would search
For his fav'rite serenader—
A banjo marked but sixpence cheap,
And this is the tune he played her (*imitation*).

5.

So time went on, but they stood there
Until the dawn of summer
Brought dolls from Paris fresh and fair,
Including a French drummer.
Soon did the Frenchman gain her love,
He danced and bowed so politely,
But a popgun (*imitation*) sent his soul above
To the top shelf, damaged slightly.

6.

One afternoon her true love cried,
“Are my glass eyes me deceiving?”
His face waxed wroth as he espied
His dolly bought and leaving.
He prayed that her arms and legs might stand
The knocks that she'd be receiving,
And as her brown paper shroud was lost in the
crowd
A nightingale (verse unfinished)*

* This line was usually sung—

Poor Punch (or The band) bewailed her leaving
(With imitations of Punch or musical instruments).

7.

Alas ! a cruel searching sun
 Pour'd in on his complexion ;
 And he could feel his flaxen locks
 Parting from their connection.
 The glow of health his cheeks once more
 Had faded past detection,
 And his eyes of blue had sunk from the glue,
 And he died in deep dejection.

Most of Leslie's favourite songs were on the all-absorbing theme of love.

The following was a trifle which Leslie contributed to the *Entr'acte*, very hastily done and afterwards retouched, and introduced into *Frankenstein*:

LOVE IN THE ORCHESTRA.

1.

Now Violin loved Viola—in sweet cadenza she
 Had won him and he soon became his own fiddle-ety.
 Bass Viol was his rival, but his deep sighs touched her not ;
 Fid's gentle voice she much preferred, and sad was B. V's lot.

2.

But Violin Bass Viol met, discordant were their tones,
 Wagnerian wails and high-pitched screeches mingled with their
 groans.
 They with their bows a duel fought until Fid's bridge was broke,
 And sadly scratched his varnished face. Bass scatheless lit a
 smoke.

3.

When Fid returned a wreck the lady sacked him on the spot—
 For marry such a fright, she said, she certainly would not ;

But the "Wedding March," less First Fid's part, was played
that very noon,
Bass Viol wedded Viola, who was given by tall Bassoon.

FRED LESLIE.

The following, being more of the topical order,
he intended to have sung in *Cinder-Ellen*, but,
not finding room for it, he sent it, just before his
fatal illness, as a contribution to the Christmas
number of the *Pelican* :

"WHEN I'M HOME SEC."

The proper study of mankind (the poet says) is man,
And you'll admit we're organised upon a faulty plan ;
I'll rectify the present imperfection if I can,

When I'm Home Sec.

We're muddled by so many and such various sorts of cooks,
All dangling on their several peculiar crazy hooks ;
You'll have to take your orders from my simple set of books,

When I'm Home Sec.

All School Board candidates will have to learn to read and write ;
When better taught they'll see, perhaps, it's wrong to swear
and fight,

And whenever they are rude they shall be sent to school at night,

When I'm Home Sec.

Likewise the County Councillors shall have some education,
And Vestries in like manner pass a strict examination ;
They'll have to do a lot more work and mend their conversation,

When I'm Home Sec.

To work eight hours a day I shall be told is much too long,
Six hours, or four, or two will do—that's if a man is strong ;
And by and by to work at all will be precisely wrong,

When I'm Home Sec.

For principles of liberty can never be forgot,
And Britons won't be slaves, you know, though Britain goes to
pot ;

So we'll have our full week's wages, boys, whether we work or not,
When I'm Home Sec.

When Parliament has fixed by law what we may eat and drink,
How we shall spend our Sundays, and whether we may wink,
There may be other things to want attention, I should think,
When I'm Home Sec.

We'll have an Act to say what style of trousers shall be worn,
Whom we shall wed, and when, shall be Gazetted every morn,
And on the Sabbath Day no babies ever shall be born,
When I'm Home Sec.

(Encore Verse.)

Parental legislation seems a necessary thing,
And so by Act of Parliament we'll have to weep and sing.
I hope that all the faddists will about have had their fling,
When I'm Home Sec.

Then we may have enactments which will slay the man who
snores,
The ladies wear a regulation bonnet out of doors ;
And fourteen days' imprisonment may punish all encores,
When I'm Home Sec.

The "second edition" of *Cinder-Ellen* was produced at the Gaiety on Saturday, October 1st, and met with a hearty welcome. Some of the new features had been tried and practised in the course of the provincial tour, but during the week at Islington which concluded the tour, they had been rigorously suppressed in order that the re-clad play

might be presented in all its freshness to its patrons in the Strand. Each of the novelties in turn was received with acclamation by a crowded audience, and there was almost an equal cordiality



MISS MAGGIE DUGGAN

in the press. Extracts are appended which are fair samples.

The *Daily Chronicle* said :

“The Gaiety Theatre, which during the recess has under-

gone some decorative embellishments, reopened for the season on Saturday, a typical Gaiety audience crowding the house to welcome the return of their stage favourites, and a general brightness and hilarity pervading everything, from the new dresses and scenery to the players themselves. Preceded by a pleasant little piece by Mr. Sidney Bowkett called *A Snowstorm*, in which Miss Maggie Roberts and Mr. G. T. Minshull played agreeably, the substantial fare was a 'second edition' of *Cinder-Ellen up Too Late*. There is absolutely the merest thread of a cohesive story in this latest version of *Cinderella*, but it is vastly exhilarating and amusing. It is a refined variety entertainment more than a burlesque, for it burlesques nothing, but it never flags a moment, and is full of whimsical tricks, gags and surprises. Mr. F. Leslie as part author is more than usually justified in making it what he pleases, and, as he has the lion's share of the opportunities, and his genius never palls, he makes the second edition even more diverting than the first, while retaining all that was good in the latter. His companions are not behind in the same direction, and the general result is continuous laughter, and a new lease of life for this merry piece of nonsense. The novelties mostly consist in new songs. Mr. C. Danby, who is still the 'Sir Ludgate Hill,' has a new hunting song in the first act, and a ditty concerning the planet Mars in the second, the former being the more successful. Mr. Leslie introduces a graceful song, called 'The Cigarette,' and in the school-room scene revives 'The Loves of the Lowther Arcade,' which meets with its old success. The most diverting of the new numbers, however, is a duet, 'I'm in love with the Man in the Moon,' with a clever dance. In this Mr. Leslie and Miss Letty Lind, who is again the 'Cinder-Ellen,' won uproarious applause, being twice encored. Another bright introduction is a quadrille in the second act by four demure maidens of Quakerish habit, who by a quick change break into a vivacious can-can and entirely alter their appearance. This

dance, with some comic by-play by Messrs. Leslie and Danby in a dummy private box, was redemanded again and again. Although we may question the policy of substituting a lady for Mr. F. Storey as 'Prince Belgravia,' the addition of so imposing and graceful a lady as Miss Maggie Duggan to the Gaiety ranks is pardonable. Miss Duggan is pleasing in her acting, and sings agreeably a couple of the latest successes of the music-halls with tolerable success. Most of the dresses and two of the sceries are new, and some of the incidents, particularly a funny tableau of the first act, are fresh, the management having renewed a success with a lavish hand. Boisterous receptions were given to all the performers, and when the curtain fell the 'calls' included specially Mr. Leslie and Mr. George Edwardes."

The following is from the *Daily Telegraph*:

"There was a cheery home-coming at the Gaiety Theatre on Saturday evening, when *Cinder-Ellen*, who has been tripping it during the recess for the benefit of provincial audiences, returned to her London quarters, and banished silence once more from the familiar boards. A typical gathering of 'the faithful' had assembled to bid her welcome, and so, high spirits prevailing on either side of the footlights, the occasion was a right merry one for all parties concerned. Certain changes have been made in Messrs. A. C. Torr's and W. T. Vincent's burlesque since Mr. Fred Leslie and his lively comrades were last in our midst. The custom, however, of issuing a 'second edition' when a piece of this elastic order, has, as it were, exhausted its first 'wind' is a well-established one, and those who attended at the shrine of the 'Sacred Lamp' on Saturday night were accordingly prepared to find some of the old 'numbers' replaced by novelties. Of the interpolations made for the purposes of the present revival none seems more likely to tickle the popular ear than 'The Man in the Moon,' a ditty

of American origin, if we mistake not—sung and danced to boot by Miss Letty Lind and Mr. Fred Leslie. Fantastic words, a catching melody, and a sensational leap which would land the lady in the midst of Herr Lutz's fiddlers were she not deftly intercepted in mid-air by her companion, will assuredly cause this duet to be voted one of *Cinder-Allen's* happiest



MR. FRED STOREY AGAIN

features. It is pleasant also to renew acquaintance with Mr. Leslie's graceful toy-ballad, 'Love in the Lowther Arcade,' which is sung once again as only its author can sing it."

Miss Maggie Duggan, whose engagement to play "Prince Belgravia" in the new edition was consequent on the managerial desire to increase the feminine interest, proved unquestionably an

attraction, but did not compensate for the absence of Mr. Fred Storey, who was consequently induced, after a retirement of three weeks, to re-enter the cast, a new character, named "Lord Leatherhead," being added for his accommodation, and some alterations made in the dialogue to account for his interference with the action of the play.

"The Man in the Moon," which was one of the most picturesque features of the second edition, was originally an American song, and was rewritten for the Gaiety as a duet, the dance and action being invented by Leslie. The dance was not a mere set of steps and turnings, but a little pantomime, in which the actor pursued the actress round the stage, knelt to her, and finally, as described, arrested her flying leap by catching her in his arms close to the footlights. The first verse of the duet ran as follows :

THE MAN IN THE MOON.

SHE.—I have found a most wonderful lover.

HE.—There's no one that I can discover.

SHE.—He must be the owner of millions untold,
He dresses in copper and silver and gold,
He's new every month, though a million years old ;
You'll find out his name pretty soon.

HE.—I'm not very clever at that sort of game,
But still I can guess at your singular flame ;
I know who he is, though I don't know his name—
You're in love with the Man in the Moon.

The last of the many changes effected during the run of *Cinder-Ellen* prior to Leslie's withdrawal was the introduction of Mr. Arthur Playfair, mimic and actor, who contributed some clever imitations of living actors. Fred and he soon arranged a little trick upon the audience.

"I will now," said Playfair, "give you an imitation of Mr. Fred Leslie," and walked off the stage, as usual, to reappear in the assumed character.

The resemblance was simply marvellous, and the snatch of a song from *Rip Van Winkle* was in Leslie's best manner. The audience shouted a rapturous recall, and the deception was made clear when *two* Fred Leslies walked on together and bowed their thanks. Leslie had made up exactly like Playfair, and imitated himself.

Audiences, of course, never object to be amused by little frauds of this kind, but Leslie had nevertheless a great idea of the respect due to the patrons of the theatre, and would have been the last person to take an unwarrantable liberty with or a questionable advantage over them. Many instances of his fair dealing in this respect might be given, and the principle which he laid down in the construction and presentation of his business is a good example. He fully followed as far as possible the rule to make the latter portion of a burlesque the strongest part, seeing that the

people may be getting tired and want some stimulus for their flagging interest. But he would never sacrifice to this consideration the balance of the play nor rob one act for the benefit of another. While endeavouring to keep some good bits until near the finish, he has refused many solicitations even from influential quarters to put off longer than need be some striking business, such as the fall downstairs in *Cinder-ElLEN*, or the slate dance in *Ruy Blas*. Both these incidents occurred in the early part of the entertainment, and he was repeatedly told that the late-comers, who could not get away from dinner early enough to see the beginning of the show, complained of missing the gem of the piece. There would have been no practical difficulty in meeting their wishes by introducing the circumstance at a later stage, but Leslie argued that this would be unfair to those of the audience who came at the appointed time, especially the occupants of the cheaper seats, most of whom had been long waiting and ought not to have their pleasure postponed for the benefit of others.

And it was not alone with the audience that he kept faith. His fairness to his fellow comedians has been marked by all who have associated with him behind the footlights. This has been commented upon by persons who did not know him except from the auditorium. He was

scrupulously careful not to trench upon another's ground, and, although it was his privilege for many years to "take the stage" whenever he was upon it, he often preferred to put another forward if only for the relief and realism to be obtained from his own relative obscurity.

Mr. George Edwardes declares that Leslie was utterly devoid of the common weakness known as stage jealousy. He never objected to any actor or actress going before or coming after him or taking the wind out of his sails. He knew that he had the power, under any circumstances, of holding his own. He was never known to complain to the management of any one upon the stage of any theatre in which he was engaged, but if anybody anticipated his wheezes or spoilt his business, he would find some comical mode of reprisal which never provoked an ill feeling.

Strange to say, his strongest act of professional retaliation was performed off the stage, and has a touch of humour in it which relieves it of rancour.

A brother actor, "X," escorted a party to the theatre at which Fred was playing, and, with a lack of taste and good behaviour, least of all to be excused in an actor, engaged in conversation with his friends during the performance. Leslie and his colleagues were much disturbed by this treatment, and schemes of vengeance were discussed

behind the scenes, but Fred suggested that the punishment should be left in his hands, and this was unanimously carried. A week or two later there was a *matinée* in which "X." had a long and leading part, and Fred was in the stalls with one companion—a man who was apparently as deaf as a post. As soon as "X" appeared and began his lines, the deaf man was heard to ask who "he" was and what he was doing. Fred replied loud enough to be heard all round, "Don't talk; look at your programme." "What say?" cried the other. "Don't talk," said Fred; and "Order, order," cried the people. Presently he that seemed deaf asked another question, and the scene was repeated, and this went on at intervals for a quarter of an hour. Then one of the attendants brought a note addressed to Leslie as follows:

"Dear Leslie,—For mercy's sake take your deaf friend out of the stalls and give him a drink. We cannot get on with the show.—Yours painfully,
X."

"What's the matter?" asked deafy. "They want you to go," shouted Fred. "Shan't go!" protested the other. "Very well, I shall," exclaimed his companion, and "Order, order," cried the people. So Fred, having carried his protest sufficiently far, and not wishing to continue the disturbance, sought another part of the house, and

his friend, who seemed to recover his hearing on the instant, sat still and enjoyed the entertainment in peace.

To Leslie's generosity to his fellow actors, Mr. Arthur Roberts, who was his nearest competitor, bears full testimony in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He says :

"Fred and I were the best of friends ; and it is a pleasing reflection that during the time we were together in business and since, some ten years in all, we never had an angry word. He would unfold all his plans for burlesque to me, and I did the same with him. Long before he actually went in for burlesque, he asked me how I thought he would succeed in that line. I couldn't imagine him in a burlesque piece, after having seen him play such characters as 'Rip Van Winkle,' and so on ; so imagine my admiration and surprise when he made his first appearance as 'Jonathan Wild' ! At that time I was playing at the Gaiety in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, the commencement of Mr. George Edwardes's management, and it was owing to a lawsuit between the late Mr. A. Henderson and the then Gaiety management that I had to return to the Avenue by order of the Court of Chancery. Fred, who had been at that time playing in a piece called the *Fay of Fire* at the Opéra Comique, which, unfortunately for the management, turned out a *Fay of Frost*, was out of an engagement, and Mr. George Edwardes, with that keen eye for business which is one of his great characteristics, snapped him up, with the result, as is common knowledge, that the Gaiety has never since looked back, owing to the marvellous ability and invention of Fred Leslie chiefly and his merry companions.

"Fred never seemed to have an atom of jealousy in his composition, which so often exists between artists of a similar line of business. It was he who first brought the 'Dotlet' to

me—a song that in my professional career considerably added to my reputation. I myself had such a great opinion of his inventive powers that I arranged with him for the production of a burlesque—*Guy Fawkes, Esq.*—written by him, which was played by my company in the provinces for the period of nearly a year.”

Mr. Roberts also says :

“Leslie was one whose conversation was always charming and witty, but, seeing him constantly, you did not take heed to remember his good things. I call to mind one evening a few of us had dinner at the Café Royale, and I was in the chair. It was at the time when I was playing ‘Captain Crosstree’ in the comic opera of *Blue-Eyed Susan*. Leslie proposed my health in a jolly speech, in which he said, in his playful way, that comedians might but for accident have been playing tragedy, and pictured the chairman in the character of ‘Hamlet.’ He was afraid, however, he said, that ‘the notion would make a *Tree cross*, and possibly spoil a “*Crosstree*.”’ And all I could think of as a rejoinder was to say how much I liked the dear old fellow, and tell him that I would do anything for him, if it was only to play ‘ashes’ to his *Cinder-Ellen*.”

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WOODMAN COMETH

*And many strokes, though with a little axe,
Hew down and fell the hardest timber'd oak.*

KING HENRY VI.

ALTHOUGH possessing a sound constitution and enjoying as a rule good health, Fred Leslie, as we have seen, had several illnesses which interrupted his work upon the stage. Gastric derangements were the usual complaints, and were probably the motive of other disorders which he occasionally suffered ; but the infirmity, though it may have been habitual, was seldom intense, and a little rest and attention invariably and rapidly restored his normally good condition. Once in America he had scarlet fever, a disease which seldom visits the members of his profession. It was in January 1884, and, although it was a light attack, it kept him in bed for three weeks. That these repeated assaults may have weakened his frame, predisposed it to other attacks, and lessened the power of resistance, is but too probable.

Leslie's last illness came on by slow degrees.

He was unwell towards the end of the third week in November, and was positively ill on Monday, the 21st day of that month. He continued, however, at work, hoping that the sensations he was suffering were only temporary and would pass away, but he sent for his medical adviser, Dr. Mills, and put himself under strict regimen. Almost from the first, however, he had an idea that the symptoms he felt were those of typhoid fever, of which a cousin, a fine young fellow, had died two years before. But he courageously battled with his disorder, and even assisted at a *matinée* at Drury Lane Theatre for the benefit of the Theatrical Fund, appearing with Miss Letty Lind in the duet, "I'm in love with the Man in the Moon." This was on Thursday, November 24th. On the previous Tuesday afternoon, to oblige his friend Mr. Henry Grant, and help the poor of the neighbourhood, he attended a concert at the Town Hall of St. Martin's, Trafalgar Square, and sang "Love in the Lowther" and his "Sneezing Song," but he told Mr. Grant that he felt very ill.

Lionel Brough was the recipient of two of his latest letters. They were the following :

"Dear Lal,—Last night I heard indirectly that on the occasion of the dinner next Monday I should be expected to respond to a toast—that of The Drama, I believe. I would much rather be allowed to remain silent on this occasion, and

feel sure that there will be little difficulty in finding some one who would fulfil this duty in a far more eloquent manner than

“Yours sincerely,

“FRED LESLIE.

“GAIETY THEATRE, 18/11/92.”

“8 TAVISTOCK CHAMBERS, NEW OXFORD STREET, W C

“Dear Lal,—I am in such a feverish state that I dare not leave the house; so do not expect me nor my guest, who is here with me and won't go alone. It is most unfortunate, as I was looking forward to supporting you on this important occasion. With every good wish for what is certain to be, under your genial and able chairmanship, a jolly and successful evening,

“Believe me, my dear Lal, yours sincerely,

“FRED LESLIE.

“20/11/92.”

On the night of his last appearance on the stage I called at the Gaiety and saw him in his room while he was dressing for his part. It was Friday, November 25th, 1892. He looked in perfect health, but he complained of being very unwell, and said that he had been getting worse for several days. “When was I taken queer, George?” he asked. “Last Monday,” replied the watchful servitor. “And to-night,” continued Fred, “I don't know how I shall get through my work. I hope I shall not break down.” And in his humorous way he added, “My cousin is in front, and she would be disappointed.” He tried hard to be gay, poor fellow, and questioned me about Northampton, where I had been to see

Cinder-Ellen played by Mr. Van Biene's touring company. He was glad to have my decidedly



W. T. VINCENT

favourable but unflattering report. Talking of his health again, he asked what were the first symp-

toms of typhoid fever. I answered by surmising that he had a return of his old enemy gastritis, or some less serious disorder of the stomach, and comforted him with the prediction that a few days in bed would set him right. I bade him good night and went to the front of the theatre where I met my wife. She had been to see Miss Nellie Farren, and Fred had called for and driven her down to the theatre. She was more impressed than I had been by his condition. He told her that the doctors thought he was merely suffering from a bilious attack, but that he felt sure he had typhoid fever coming on, just as his cousin had two years before. We sat in the auditorium and saw him play through the first act. The rest of the audience may have detected nothing singular in the performance, and I never heard heartier laughter or applause. But we, knowing how he suffered, noticed his frequent distress, manifested by his turning away from the glare of light and resting his aching head against the wings. He seemed to breathe with pain, and we could almost see him sigh. We could not endure more than the one act. The curtain fell upon him in the elopement scene, where the Servant and Cinder-Ellen were captured in the snow. It was raised again for "a call," and I looked upon poor Fred for the last time. I had parted from my best loved friend, never to meet again on earth.

Day by day later, by calls at his residence, or by letters and telegrams from his secretary (Mr. Edwin H. Shear), we heard of his increasing illness



TAVISTOCK CHAMBERS, NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON

and imminent jeopardy. It was soon evident that his disorder was really typhoid, and that the attack was most malignant. His brother Charles left his business and was almost continually with the patient night and day. Miss Nellie Farren, who

had apartments in the same building (Tavistock Chambers, New Oxford Street), remembered how Leslie had waited upon her in Australia and on the voyage home, and insisted, although an invalid, in doing all in her power to help. The medical attendant under whose care Leslie had been from the very beginning of his illness, was almost constantly in attendance, and his aid was promptly supplemented by that of the famed physician, Sir Richard Quain, who had long been Fred's attached friend, and was most assiduous in his attentions. Two trained and efficient nurses were also engaged. The patient was delirious, and although he occasionally seemed to recognise one or another, it is doubtful whether he at any time, even for a brief interval, recovered his consciousness. And yet as the end drew near the watchers by the bedside were convinced that he was not only for a time in his right mind, but sensible of his impending death and sorrowing for those whom he should leave behind; for he sighed, his lip quivered, and the tears flowed fast from his eyes. On the day before he passed away, Tuesday, he seemed to rally, but it was merely the last flicker of the exhausted lamp. The doctors from the first, knowing the weak state of his heart, feared the worst, yet laboured on, but after nightfall on Tuesday the decline became so marked that the end was felt to be

only a question of hours. The grand physical constitution which Nature had provided for her gifted son fought with the Destroyer until five o'clock on Tuesday morning (December 7th, 1892), and then the soul gave up its temporary habitation and fled to the realms of immortality.

In many a home there was anguish that morning on the delivery of a telegram from his brother couched in the following words :

“Poor Fred passed away at five o'clock.—CHARLEY.”

Mr. George Edwardes closed the Gaiety Theatre the same evening, although it meant a sacrifice of £300. The bills were all covered over with black, and both a written announcement and small printed placards with deep black margins notified to the public that “In consequence of the sad death of Mr. Fred Leslie” the theatre would be closed.

How Fred Leslie could have contracted typhoid fever is apparently inexplicable. It is even more strange that three prominent actors associated much together should have died of the same disease within about three years—George Stone, Edward D. Ward, and Fred Leslie. The two first named were, however, far from the Gaiety both in distance and time when they were seized with their fatal illnesses. They both died in Edinburgh. Stone succumbed on

November 9th, 1889, and was buried at Morningside Cemetery, Edinburgh. Ward's death occurred on November 15th, 1889, and he lies interred in the Grange Cemetery, Edinburgh.

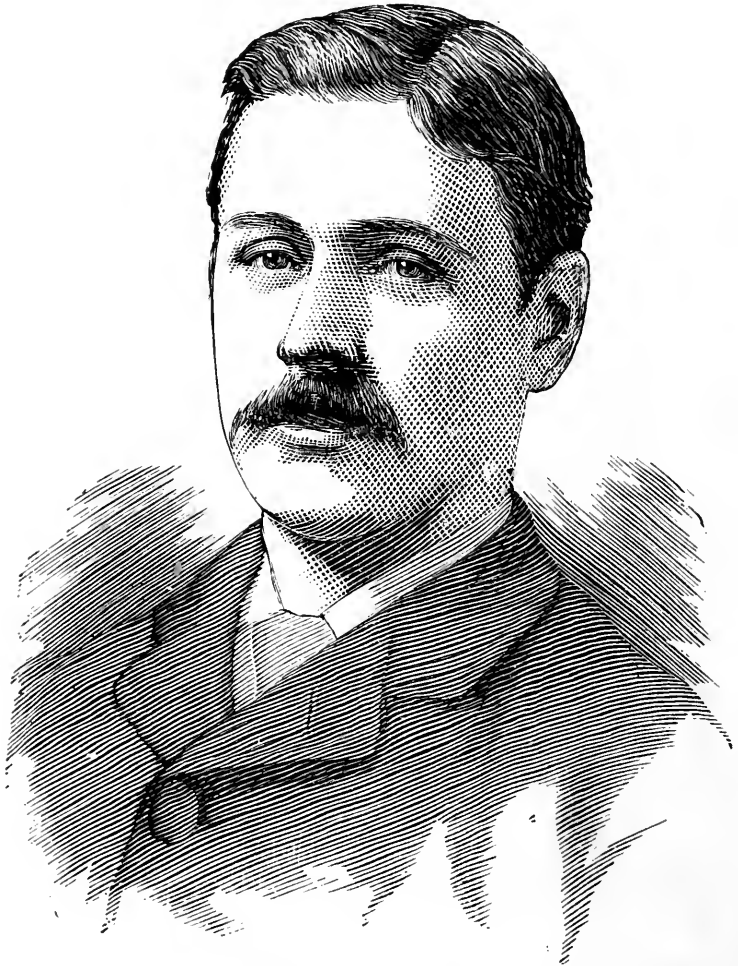


MR. GEORGE STONE

Only a little more than two months before his death Leslie took me to see dear old Stone's grave.

Fevers and theatres, alas! are too often asso-

ciated, but the Gaiety is quite out of the category of theatres in its almost unrivalled conditions of health. The dressing-rooms are in a new building quite separate and distinct from the theatre



MR. E. D. WARD

itself, and not only constructed according to the latest laws of sanitation, but apparently all stone and cement which would show up every speck of dirt. No palace, no prison, could be more

carefully built, more scientifically fitted, or more scrupulously clean. After Leslie's death sanitary experts searched every part of the theatre and also the chambers in which he resided, but could find no trace or indication whatever of any defect likely to be prejudicial to health. But if it be possible to carry the seeds of typhoid in the system for several months, then there is no doubt that Leslie and the other victims also may have traced their poisoning to one or other of the provincial theatres in which the dressing-rooms, even of the principal artists, are exposed to sanitary conditions which are disgraceful to their managers and utterly discreditable to the public authorities. Actors, moreover, have no absolute security in the fact that the theatre to which they belong is protected from contamination and properly ventilated. They are accustomed to play at other theatres for benefits and the like, and all theatres are not the same. And actors, it has been noticed, seem peculiarly liable to typhoid, and, when they contract it, seldom have it lightly. Mr. Harry Nicholls, who was just recovering when Fred was taken away, had a very narrow escape, and in Fred's case the doctors declared that he had sufficient of the poison in his body to have killed three men. It is probable that his several previous attacks of gastritis had left some chronic weakness of the constitution which

enabled the typhus to take a strong grip and lessened his power of withstanding its ravages. It was certainly of the most virulent type, even from the first seizure.

The sorrow evoked by the lamentable death of Fred Leslie was universal and profound. During his illness he was several times reported dead, and indeed, in all his illnesses he had been similarly treated, and it has been said that he had more opportunities of reading his biography than any other man of his time. The sad truth was, however, too soon manifested, and many were the expressions of surprise and melancholy which were heard in every quarter.

The *Daily Telegraph* on the following morning contained the following as a "leader":

"It is seldom possible in these days to describe an actor's death as 'eclipsing the gaiety' of the public. There is a sense in which the loss of Mr. Fred Leslie may be said—with something more than mere play upon words—to have produced that effect; for there can be little doubt that few more serious blows could have been struck at the lighter order of theatrical entertainments than it has sustained by that melancholy event. No actor of recent years has, at any rate, so closely associated himself with it in the mind of the playgoer as Mr. Leslie. In him the very spirit of modern burlesque, with its lightness, its effervescing quality, its restless variety of appeal to the eye and ear of its audience, appeared to be incarnate. And to say this of any actor is to award him considerably higher praise than many critics of the old-fashioned school are apt to suppose. It is only too easy for criticism to confound the characteristics

of any given species of dramatic work with those of the performer who interprets it, and to assume that the objections which may, plausibly perhaps, be urged against the one detract from the merits of the other. So far from that, they may possibly even enhance those merits, and this was assuredly to a great extent the case with that prince of burlesque actors who has just passed away. The slightness, not to say the poverty of the dramatic material in which he worked in most cases only served to bring the consummate skill of the artist into stronger relief. It was, indeed, the highest testimony to the perfection of his art that he was able in his most successful moments to make the most exigent of critics indifferent to, if not, indeed, unconscious of the medium through which it was displayed. No slender array of accomplishments would suffice to achieve such a feat as this, it may readily be imagined, and the histrionic equipment of Mr. Fred Leslie included a truly remarkable variety of gifts and attainments very rarely found in company. His physical advantages, to begin with, were unusually great. Nature, who, like other mothers, so often sets her face against the dramatic ambitions, and can sometimes only be induced after painful solicitations to accord them a grudging assistance, can never have been in any doubt as to the proper vocation of this particular child. She could never have meant him for anything but an actor, and must have had the burlesque of the future in her eye when she provided him with his physical outfit. Assuredly she must have fashioned his mobile features and modulated the tones of his singularly effective voice—as pleasant to the ear in song as it was mirth-moving in recitation—with that purpose in direct view. His figure itself, also a distinct and valuable contribution from the maternal hand of Nature to the same end, completed the catalogue of those physical qualifications of the burlesque actor with which he was so richly endowed, and which, even with a minimum of talent, would no doubt have insured him a respectable measure of success.

“That his actual success so far transcended this standard was due to other than physical gifts, or even to their assiduous cultivation. It is no exaggeration of eulogy, no abuse of language, to say that the secret was at bottom an intellectual one. Many an actor might have possessed his bodily advantages, and have failed, with the most careful development of them, to attain to Mr. Leslie's level. The grace, vivacity, and intelligence of his acting were all his own ; and two out of these three qualities have their origin in the brain of the actor, and appeal, not to the senses, but to the mind and the imagination of the spectator. It is the intellectual sympathy between the audience and the actor which is at the root of all dramatic pleasure, and it is in establishing and maintaining this sympathy that the art of acting, from its highest to its lowest manifestations, mainly consists. And it is precisely because Mr. Leslie possessed in so extraordinary a degree this peculiar influence over his audiences that the very enemies of latter-day burlesque may, as we have already said, be called as the strongest witnesses to his power. The poorer the play the better must have been the actor. If men of intelligence could be, as they were, delighted by the extravagances of this inimitable droll, it was because by sheer force of his own intelligence he was able to raise the performance to an intellectual level. Thus it was impossible to witness a performance of Mr. Leslie's in burlesque without feeling that mere names and classifications count for little, that the grotesque is as genuine a form of art as the highest comedy, and that skill, grace, and delicacy of handling, keenness of observation, and even the ‘inspired moment,’ are as much among the possibilities of the one as of the other. The master, one felt, is the master, wherever he may be met, and his mastery may be no less conspicuous in the broadest than in the finest effects of the mimic stage. Its substantial identity, moreover, throughout the various forms of drama was strikingly illustrated in this actor, whose perform-

ances never failed to suggest to any critical observer that there was scarcely any branch of dramatic art in which he was not qualified to excel, so varied were the technical abilities which he showed himself to possess, and so marvellous the inventive and selective faculty which accompanied and directed their exercise.

“To many people this very circumstance will seem an additional reason for regretting Mr. Leslie’s loss. They grudge the diversion of such genuine dramatic talent from what were once styled ‘legitimate’ dramatic channels, and its waste upon a soil so thin and unfruitful as that of contemporary burlesque. It is impossible not to feel a certain sympathy with this sentiment. Without insisting too loftily on the distinctions between the higher and lower departments of the drama, one cannot refuse to recognise the fact that the burlesque of the present day affords a typical example of the degradation of an organism. Its function, as formerly understood, has long since been extinct, and it has now almost ceased to possess even an organic structure. The work which it used to perform in the living body of the drama has been taken off its hands by farcical comedy. A generation has passed since burlesques had any definite satirical purpose, and it is already a good many years since they have managed to do without so much as a plot. There is a fish known as the amphioxus, which forms the link between the vertebrate and invertebrate kingdoms ; and for some time the burlesque stood in much the same position between the play and the music-hall entertainment. The backbone of narrative which once ran through it had become gelatinous. It has since then, however, made a still further descent in the zoological scale, and it now resembles one of those lower organisms from which any number of limbs may be lopped at will without the animal seriously missing them. There is scarcely any scene in a modern burlesque which might not be extirpated without leaving any traces upon the

play, which would be as much—or as little—alive after the operation as before it. One can well comprehend, therefore, the feeling of impatience with which many playgoers of the more critical order regarded the exclusive dedication of such an artistic talent as Mr. Leslie's to so degenerate a form of art. He is himself understood to have cherished the ambition to distinguish himself in other and higher forms; and it must always, of course, be a matter of regret, and, indeed, of pathetic memory, that death should have left this ambition unfulfilled. Nevertheless, we must once more remind those who dwell too much upon the waste of the actor's powers that the loss even of the critical public was in some sense also their gain; and that the very worthlessness of his artistic material supplied a stimulus to his versatility, and called faculties into play which might not elsewhere have found such a field for their combined exercise. What his art lost in elevation it must assuredly have gained in comprehension. In no other department of the drama would it have been possible for him to be, as in many a scene at the Gaiety Mr. Leslie was, both the actor and the play. That such a position should be a possible and even a usual one may be a reproach to the art, but it is full of opportunities for the artist. This master of fantastic comedy was, in fact, one of the most accomplished of improvisators; and he may be said not so much to have acted plays as to have 'made them' as he went along. It is for this reason—namely, that the playwright of burlesque has been practically merged in the actor—that the loss of such a dramatic artist as Mr. Leslie will be so severely felt."

In a contribution to the *Pall Mall*, Mr. Justin Huntley McCarthy wrote as follows:

"Mr. Fred Leslie was, as all actors should be, as all actors unhappily are not, an artist. In recent years his name has been chiefly associated with the wild buffooneries of burlesque.

But the buffoonery of Mr. Leslie was buffoonery of a very special kind. In its maddest moments, in the exuberance of its riot, it had in it a fantastic quality, an element of grotesque poetry, which distinguished it honourably from aimless clowning, from the extravagance of the horse-collar. It is a tendency of the time to attribute genius too lightly to the servants of art, but it might be said without exaggeration that there was a touch of genius in the eccentricities and the humour of Mr. Leslie's strange creations. He gave his gifts to the service of burlesque, gave them liberally, gave them loyally; if the material in which he worked had been more worthy of his daring fancy and his infinite pains, burlesque might have taken a high place as the dramatic expression of caricature. His Jonathan Wild, for instance, in the burlesque on *Jack Sheppard* was a creation instinct with grim humour. The figure that Ainsworth had taken from Fielding and made melodramatic Leslie took from Ainsworth and made ludicrous, but with a ludicrousness that was always proportioned to the distorted conception of the thief-taker, and that retained throughout something of the terrible features appropriate to the part. As far as was possible in the topsy-turvy world of burlesque, the character was seriously conceived and logically carried out. Again, his 'Don Cæsar de Bazan' in the burlesque on *Ruy Blas*, through all its very delirium of variety entertainment, carried with it a conviction that the actor would have played, and played well, the real, ragged gentleman rascal of Hugo's play. For there was always in Leslie's acting a curious note of earnestness which justified those—and there were many—who maintained that he was squandering his gifts upon burlesque. They would point to this delicate touch in one caricature, and that heroic suggestion in another. They would speak of the delicate, whimsical pathos of the 'Looking-Glass' song in *Cinder-Ellen*. Above all, they would dwell upon that interpretation of *Rip Van Winkle*, which delighted London, and

which was able to captivate even those who had seen Joseph Jefferson. Emphasising all the performance, all the promise, all the possibility in Leslie's work, they would ask if there were not better things for him to do than clowning, clown he never so wisely. It is probable that Leslie thought so himself. His inclination seems to have turned, his ambition prompted, towards comedy. He had in him many of the qualities that tend to make a great comedian. His handsome face, his almost painfully brilliant eyes, his musical voice, his graceful carriage—these were physical attributes which, coupled with his creative and inventive power, should have carried him far. His more critical admirers, those who were not content to take him merely as a glorious grotesque, foresaw for him a career of smooth success as a comedian. And now, in the fine phrase of Evelyn, 'is all in the dust.' Those who knew Mr. Leslie personally will grieve long and deeply ; but it is the public that is most to be pitied."

The following are a few out of a thousand testimonies to the same effect :

"Had Mr. Leslie never taken to the stage he would probably have excelled as an artist, pure and simple, for he loved to fill up his leisure with artistic pursuits. With pencil, crayon, or brush, he was as much at home as in 'make-up'—at which he excelled—and the way in which Leslie could 'dress' a part, or design a costume, was much better known behind the scenes than in the auditorium. Fred could paint on canvas or boards as cleverly as he could paint his face for the 'boards,' and during his wife's lifetime his house was hung with water-colour sketches, and not a few capital oil-paintings by himself. Nor must it be imagined, because with him 'the sacred lamp of burlesque' burned so brightly, that he had no higher aspiration. Nature had gifted him with a fund of

humour, but he delighted to draw upon the sympathies and even tears of an audience upon the rare occasions when he essayed serious parts. 'There was a strong touch of tragedy, or keen sense of the tragic, about him, contrasting with his exuberant comicality, and he was at all times thoroughly in earnest in all he did, even in his merriest moments. 'To meet him during a week-end at Clacton-on-Sea was to enjoy a 'feast of reason and flow of soul' too seldom permitted to those who did not enjoy his warm friendship.'—*Society*, Dec. 17, 1892.

"Enormous sums must have been made by him. Eighteen months ago—I am breaking no confidence—the Tivoli Music Hall people were willing to engage him for a year at £200 a week."—*Land and Water*, Dec. 12, 1892.

"So Fred Leslie is dead. As I write I have the news. How we shall miss him! He was a rare creature; a most delicate and beautiful combination of fun and sentiment, never vulgar, always irresistibly funny, and of a bewitching presence. It was strange to go to the Gaiety and on the same evening to be near tears and convulsed with mirth. Do you remember a hundred quaintnesses of his? That time he calmly and solemnly stalked on to the stage and bowed in acknowledgment of the applause that was meant for Storey's dancing? That whistling song of his—do you recall it? His 'business' with the bits of paper and the orange-pips and the ink?"—*Vanity Fair*, Dec. 10, 1892.

"Thousands who knew him only across the footlights have grieved sincerely at the loss of the clever and fantastic Fred Leslie, the life and soul, the informing spirit, of all the Gaiety burlesques he has had anything to do with in the course of the past few years. He was an artist to the finger-tips in all his work, a gentleman, and clean-minded. The humour that never relied upon double meanings or gross vulgarisms has greatly the superiority over that in which those poor aids have frequently to be resorted to. It would be well if there were

more Fred Leslies on the stage, were it in respect of cleanliness of thought and word alone."—*Sportsman*, Dec. 10, 1892.

"We of the *Referee*, who knew him so well, admired his versatile talents, and appreciated his good personal qualities, have hardly yet been able to persuade ourselves that he has gone never to return, and that his death is not some hideous dream from which we shall presently awake to offer to the most gifted comedian of his day congratulations upon some fresh triumph at the footlights. What we admired him for was his many-sidedness as an artist; what we loved him for was his want of 'side' as a successful man in his dealings with others upon whom fortune had not smiled so benignly, his honesty, his frankness, his good temper. Fred Leslie was very deservedly an idol of the public, but in his communings with those about him he never posed, as so many successful actors do, as one with indisputable right to be worshipped."—*Referee*, Dec. 12, 1892.

"There has been in theatrical circles only one topic of conversation—Fred Leslie. It was known latterly that he was very ill, but it was never thought that the illness would be fatal. When, therefore, the news of his death was made public, it created a veritable sensation among those connected with the profession. Leslie was (comparatively) so young and (apparently) so buoyant that his death was the last thing which one would have thought of. Now that he has gone, we realise, more keenly perhaps than we did, what a treasure we had in him. Of course, burlesque, as we have it nowadays, is not a very dignified phase of histrionic art; but Leslie gave to it ingenuity, finish, and effervescence, and so made it, in his person, thoroughly enjoyable. It was delightful to observe the pleasure which he himself extracted out of his comicalities."—*The People*, Dec. 12, 1892.

A Sheffield paper said :

"Mr. Fred Leslie's death has caused much greater stir in London than did the death of the remorseless master of many millions. To-day Woolwich and Stannington (a village near Sheffield) are quarrelling for the honour of having given him to the world. The critics are wrangling as they only wrangle over the reputation of really great men."

The *Athenæum* testified that :

"Many of his representations were marked by refinement and delicacy not often seen in the class of assumptions in which he is best known. As Robson gave burlesque some of the vigour and intensity of tragedy, Leslie may be said almost to have elevated it into comedy."

From Australia and America came similar expressions of admiration and regret.

"His name," said the *Melbourne Standard*, "will endure long in Australia. Those who went to see him oftenest knew him best and loved him most. His familiar 'Hallo there' still re-echoes through the land, and there will be a widespread regret that we will hear it from his lips no more."

The Continental papers were scarce less moved by the calamity than the journals of the English-speaking people.

In the *Indépendance Belge* a thoughtful writer said :

"Handsome Fred Leslie ! who was scarcely thirty-seven years of age, with his charm of look, voice, and gesture, gave himself up entirely to the most wildly grotesque and fantastic branch of his art. He was nearly as much idolised in burlesque as Irving is in tragedy—yes, as the great Irving himself. The

creator of the principal rôles in *Ruy Blas*, *Cinder-Allen*, and in all the series of *fin-de-siècle* burlesques of the last ten years, Leslie still managed to introduce each evening some fresh drollery, even when disguised as a woman. His popularity secured for him a triumphal tour in America and Australia, for the immense Anglo-Saxon family scattered over the globe all wished to see him, and insisted that his infectious laugh should be heard all over the world. . . . One is undoubtedly right in saying that he was a very great artist—greater perhaps than the comedians who become famous in the serious line; for it must be infinitely more easy to interpret a noble part in a sublime work than to cover oneself with glory in the incoherent and trivial English burlesques of the present day, which are invertebrate pantomimes without plot and without wit, where the individuality and imagination of the actor has to supply and invent that which makes the piece go, and secures for it the noisy applause of the pit. However this may be, I would reiterate this point, that the same public which boldly hissed *Widowers' Houses* at the Independent Theatre, has manifested the most touching grief on learning the sudden death of the idol of the Gaiety, who fell a victim to typhoid fever; and this double phenomena demonstrates the truth that the English public do not want the realistic drama with its sombre pictures and bitter morality; it asks only for relaxation. It goes to the theatre to get away from the troubles of life, and seeks to be cheered, not depressed. The sole aim of dramatic art here is to amuse its public, and all our flowers and all our tears are for the authors and actors who have made us laugh. . . . Allowing for a shade of theatrical exaggeration, it was the sentiment of England to which one of the comrades of Fred Leslie, Miss Nellie Farren, gave expression in placing upon his coffin an emblem in form of a heart pierced by a dagger of violets, bearing this inscription: 'From Nellie, whose heart is broken by the death of the

joyous Leslie.' In all this there is a valuable indication of English taste, which will well explain the puns, the huge jokes, and Homeric buffooneries with which Shakespeare, ever careful to please his audience, has sprinkled his most gloomy dramas and his most sublime poetry."

The following may serve to show the opinion of the Germans in London. It appeared in the *Börsen Zeitung* of Berlin on the 16th of December :

"In London, on the 7th of December, Fred Leslie, 'star comedian' of the Gaiety Theatre, one of the most ideal mountebanks that the English stage ever possessed, died at the early age of thirty-seven years. It is a God-pleasing work to excite to laughter the dwellers in this many-sided 'vale of tears'; therefore must Leslie stand in the fane of sanctity. His drolleries as 'Jonathan Wild,' 'Ruy Blas,' 'Frankenstein,' and 'Captain Hardie' (?) were irresistible, and were directly born of genial poetical comprehension. That with his fine figure, his expressive eyes, his beautiful voice in speech and song, and his noble gait, he was designed for something better than the lower art of the 'comic' could not escape the observer, and yet would nobody have exchanged his drollery for the higher walks of art. Unhappily also, his feminine counterpart, Miss Nellie Farren, is incapacitated by an incurable lameness. Both together have for years past made the Gaiety Theatre the chief *rendezvous* of the *jeunesse dorée* of London."

From the mass of sympathetic letters sent to the bereaved family, two only need be selected. The first is from the leader of the Gaiety orchestra :

"7, AMPHILL SQUARE.

"Dear Mr Hobson,—Would I could find words to express my heartfelt sympathy with you at your great loss. I should say our loss, for we too mourn at the death of so great an artist—one of the brightest ornaments of our profession—a kind friend and a genial companion. Earl Londesborough wishes me to say how shocked and grieved he was to hear of Mr. Leslie's untimely death. His lordship writes: 'I have known him a long time, and I suppose, like every one else, the longer I knew him the better I liked him, and the more I admired him as an artist. It does seem especially hard that so bright and successful a young life, and one so full of promise of even greater things, should be taken, while so many that could be better spared are left.'

"Yours sincerely,

"W. MEYER LUTZ."

The second is from Lord Kinnaird:

"14, HYDE PARK TERRACE.

". . . I have indeed felt with you all in this time of trial; but what happy recollections he has left to all who had the happiness to know Frederick Leslie! I write this note in a room where we were on a bright occasion so happy, and made chiefly so by his genial presence, and well I remember also our last meeting at Brighton, as it seems but a short time since, and when he referred to this same happy gathering. His photograph shall be framed and placed in my room.

"Yours very faithfully,

"KINNAIRD."

Lord Durham in his letter said:

"Fred Leslie I admired as an artist, and regret as a friend.'

CHAPTER XXX

FAREWELL

*Sleep undisturbed within this peaceful shrine
Till angels wake thee with a note like thine !—JOHNSON.*

THE funeral took place on Saturday, December 10th. The morning of the sad event and the previous day were occupied in receiving a continuous stream of floral remembrances, many being of a very costly and unique description. The favourite flowers seemed to be Parma violets, arum lilies, Neapolitan violets, white chrysanthemums, and azaleas.

One massive wreath of white arum lilies, exotics, and chrysanthemums, had the touching inscription, "Dearly beloved children, Leslie, Lionel, and Dorothy, in loving memory of the best of fathers;" a beautiful one composed of Parma violets and white roses and lilac, "From his mother;" "A tribute of respect for a beloved master, from George, Alfred, Mary, Emma, and Annie," was a large wreath of arum lilies, white chrysanthemums, camellias, and Christmas roses with ferns. The Green Room Club sent a wreath

of arum and eucharis lilies with ferns and chrysanthemums; Mr. H. P. Hepburn, a cross of white lilac and Christmas roses; Mr. Meyer Lutz, a wreath of arums, camellias, and white chrysanthemums; Mr. Herbert Campbell, a fine cross of arums and white hyacinths; a cross of Christmas roses, white roses, arums and ferns, "With respect and sympathy from Katie Seymour;" Mr. Frederick Kaye, a wreath of arums, white jessamine, and ferns; a pretty wreath of feathery chrysanthemums and ferns, "With sincere regret from Nellie Stewart;" Mr. E. Cook, wreath of Neapolitan violets, intermingled with lilacs and ferns; "With deepest sympathy from Mr. Fred Byrne and family," was inscribed on a wreath of arums, autumn leaves, lilies, and violets; Mr. J. L. Toole sent a wreath of carnations, arum and lancifolium lilies, and white chrysanthemums in foliage; Dr. Nelson Foster, a wreath of arums, eucharis lilies, and white geraniums in foliage; Miss Kate Vaughan, a beautiful cross of white chrysanthemums, arum lilies, and white geraniums; the employés of Messrs. Hobson and Sons, a lyre made of white chrysanthemums, Christmas roses, and eucharis lilies, with "F. L." in Parma violets in centre; Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Silverthorne, large wreath of roses, violets, and ferns, and badge of white satin at bottom; Mr. William Harris, large wreath of arums, white

hyacinths, and white chrysanthemums, with ferns ; Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Whaley, a lyre of white flowers and ferns ; Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hobson, a magnificent harp with a broken string of white lilac and arums ; the Earl of Durham, a wreath of Christmas roses, camellias, gardenias, and white hyacinths ; Messrs. Alfred and Leopold De Rothschild, a wreath of arums, eucharis lilies, chrysanthemums, and ferns ; Mrs. and Miss Grey and Miss Sylvia Grey, a wreath of foliage tied with red satin ; Mr. Charles Hawtrey, wreath of orchids, geraniums, arums, and eucharis lilies ; Miss Millie Hylton, a pretty wreath of foliage, orchids, and Parma violets ; Miss Florence St. John, a beautiful cross of white carnations, Neapolitan violets, white chrysanthemums, and lilac ; Mrs. R. Greenwood Jewell, open wreath of palms, gardenias, eucharis lilies, and white carnations, with "Alas!" in gold wire in centre ; Mr. D. H. Elliott harp with broken string in Parma violets, white lilac, roses, and camellias ; Mr. F. Storey, wreath of white lilies, lilac, narcissus, and foliage.

"From Nellie (Miss Nellie Farren), a broken-hearted woman," a heart-shaped wreath of white lilac, eucharis lilies, and white chrysanthemums, with a dagger of Neapolitan violets through the heart ; "From Lillie Langtry," handsome wreath of arum lilies, orchids, roses, and ferns ; "With

deepest sympathy from Henry Irving" was on the label attached to a large oval wreath of china roses, camellias, eucharis and arum lilies, white hyacinths, and ferns; Messrs. Henry, Robert, and M. Farren-Soutar, wreath of white chrysanthemums and camellias in foliage; Mr. Edmund Routledge, wreath of white camellias; Dr. Foster (of New-cross), wreath of eucharis lilies, lilac, hyacinths, and myrtle leaves; Mr. L. H. Polak, harp with broken string of white azaleas, violets, and chrysanthemums; "In affectionate remembrance of poor Fred Leslie, from the members of Mrs. Langtry's Haymarket Company," a cross of holly and red berries, and fine arums, very prettily arranged; attached to a very large harp, over four feet in length, the wires being of Parma violets edged with white lilac, and body of white camellia and chrysanthemums, was a badge of satin and white lilac with "In affectionate remembrance from the members of the Barn Club" upon it; an oval heart of chrysanthemums, lilies, violets, and myrtle was Mr. Claude Lowther's "Last message to a dear friend"; an enormous wreath of white arums, eucharis lilies, azaleas, roses, hyacinths, stephanotis, and myrtle was "A token of our deepest sympathy from J. Beckett, A. Meyer, D. Lewis, J. O'Regan, J. McNear, and A. G. Rae," Liverpool; a beautiful cross of white exotics, Neapolitan violets, and "R.I.P." in violets in centre

was labelled, "With all love and affectionate remembrance from his old friends Nan and Will: Peace on my mind is falling, and it is not a dream;" Mr. Sydney Brough, a wreath of pink roses in autumn leaves; "In loving memory from the Gaiety Boys," wreath of white chrysanthemums, camellias, lilies, hyacinths, and ferns.

"The President and Members of the Bon Frères Club," sent a floral badge of arums, roses, gardenias, white lilac with large palm-leaves, and tied with a broad black satin sash and inscription in gold; Wilmot and Freeman, Grand Theatre, Islington, wreath of arums, camellias, and ferns; Room 66, Prince of Wales's Theatre, wreath of white camellias, eucharis lilies, and lilac; members of the Lewisham Conservative Club, open wreath with arum lilies, Parma violets and palms; Miss Letty Lind, a floral sickle of white lilac, with eucharis lilies and exotics, and centre of lily of the valley in foliage; Mr. E. J. Lonnen, "from Australia," wreath of Parma violets, arum lilies, eucharis lilies, white hyacinth, and foliage of myrtle; Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth Fitzwilliam, wreath of arum lilies, camellias, primulas, and white hyacinths, with ferns; Mr. and Mrs. C. Ellis (of Woolwich), wreath of white chrysanthemums, with arum lilies, orchids, and ferns, raised cross in centre of Parma violets; Mr. and Mrs.

H. Grant and family, oval wreath of Neapolitan violets, lilac, and arum lilies; Mr. Richard Barnard, lyre with white exotics on edge; Mr. J. C. Williamson and Mr. George Musgrove, cross of Parma violets edged with myrtle; and a wreath "In loving memory, from the girls of the Gaiety chorus."

There were also similar tokens from Mr. Walter Pallant, Mr. and Mrs. George Edwardes, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Roberts, Mr. Robert Martin, Dr. Lennox Browne, H. Newson-Smith, Mr. and Mrs. C. Waterer, Mrs. Herbert Christophers, Miss Maguire, Colonel and Mrs. North, Mrs. Jepp, Mrs. Arthur Weguelin, Mr. Herbert Campbell, Miss Constance Loseby, Mr. and Mrs. W. White and daughters, Messrs. Charles and Algernon Kennett, Mr. and Mrs. J. Fernandez, the Working Staff (Stage) of Gaiety Theatre, Mr. and Mrs. Durrant, Mr. F. Kaye, Mr. and Mrs. Elkington, Miss Henderson, Mr. Walter Dickson, Mr. and Mrs. H. Pottinger Stephens, Mr. William Yardley, Miss Stewart, "An Audience Admirer," Mrs. Wentworth Croke, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hobson, Mr. T. H. Hobson, Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Hobson, his Sisters, the Misses Hobson, Mr. and Mrs. Colbeck, the Playgoers' Club, Mr. E. Philips, "A Friend," Mr. George Cooke, Miss Foxton, Mr. J. L. Toole, Mr. and Mrs. Day, Mr. F.

J. Marchant, Miss Maggie Duggan, Mr. Adrian Ross (Arthur R. Ropes), Mr. and Mrs. Jewell, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Gratton, Mr. Bantock, Mrs. Juston, Mr. and Mrs. George Hobson and Mrs. Henry Hobson, Miss Lethbridge (Australia), Mr. and Mrs. Danby, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Howard (Edinburgh), Mr. and Mrs. Levenston, Messrs. A. and H. Blackmore, Mr. Ascherberg, Mrs. S. Agate; from "Early associates," Messrs. George Shelton, E. Garden, W. Cheeseman, Arthur Shirley, Denby Hare, W. H. White, H. Grant, J. P. Power, E. C. Silverthorne, J. A. Harrison, and H. J. Pearson; Mr. and Mrs. Frank Webster; from the members of the Eccentric Club; Mr. and Mrs. Daw; from the "supers" of the Gaiety Theatre; Miss Richardson; from company and staff of Gaiety Theatre; Mr. Horace Mills, Rev. and Mrs. Napier Whittingham; from the Gaiety Orchestra; Mr. H. J. Brickwell, Mr. and Mrs. George Alexander, Mr. Willie Edouin, Mr. Auguste Van Biene, Mr. Charles Harris, and Mr. Spencer Browne; the Bohemian Cycling Club, Charlton; "the Vincents;" Mr. Lionel Brough, Mr. and Mrs. C. Whaley, Mr. Wood and Katie James, the members of the Cosy Club, Mr. William Terriss, Miss Jessie Milward, and Mrs. Moore.

Many other floral offerings were taken to the

cemetery by their donors and could not be enumerated.

The wreath sent by the Gaiety Company was seven feet high and was said to have been the largest ever made. It consisted, as may be seen at page 257, of a wreath with the emblems of Faith, Hope and Charity in the centre, from a design by Mr. Fred Storey. The harp with the broken string, sent by the Barn Club, will also be distinguished in the sketch. Altogether there were four hundred of these loving testimonies.

On the subject of the floral tributes it was remarked in the newspapers of the following week that owing to the demand for the funeral of Leslie there was a noticeable scantiness of flowers in the churches on Sunday.

The funeral procession left Tavistock Chambers soon after 10 A.M. in the presence of a large assemblage, and in the following order :

Glass hearse bearing the body in an oak coffin, inscribed
"FREDERICK HOBSON, died Dec. 7th, 1892, aged 37 years."

Four open landaus filled with wreaths and other floral
emblems.

The chief mourners, in carriages, as follows:—

1. Master Leslie Herbert William Hobson, aged 12 ; Master Lionel Vincent Hobson, aged 9 ; the two sons of deceased. Mr. Charles Hobson and Mr. Thomas Hobson, brothers.
2. Mr. Edwin B. Hobson, brother ; Mr. Henry Hobson,

nephew ; Mr. W. Agate, wife's brother ; Mr. G. Hobson, cousin.

3. Mr. E. Bedford, sister's husband ; Dr. Foster, brother-in-law ; Mr. J. Wickham, and Mr. W. T. Vincent.

4. Mr. George Edwardes, Mr. E. Silverthorne, Mr. Walter Pallant, and Mr. Arthur Roberts.

5. Mr. W. White, Mr. C. Waterer, Mr. H. Grant, and Mr. W. Day.

6. (Miss Farren's carriage)—Mr. D. H. Elliott, of Liverpool ; Mr. Farren-Soutar, and Mrs. Moore.

7. Mr. Arthur Roberts's carriage, unoccupied.

Mrs. Moore, the only lady in the procession, was Miss Nellie Farren's sister. The deceased's third child, Dorothy (Louie Dorothy Gretchen), aged six, was not in the procession.

Passing down Endell Street and Bow Street, the route by which the late actor so often went to his daily work, the *cortège* passed the stage door of the Gaiety Theatre. The door was draped in black cloth, and at it stood the regular employés of the house—the stage carpenters and others, many of them in tears. The usually stern face of the old stage-door keeper was convulsed with grief.

The police, by a request from the family, kept the roads clear the whole of the nine miles' distance.

The Strand traffic was briefly stopped as the carriages crossed towards Waterloo Bridge, and the horses went at a trot without halting until

they reached Blackheath Village, through which they passed at a walk. Trotting again as far as Charlton House, the pace was once more and finally slackened. In Old Charlton nearly every house wore symbols of mourning, and some of the shops were entirely closed. The cemetery was reached punctually at the appointed time, twelve o'clock, and there was found assembled an enormous crowd. The coffin was borne through the weeping people to the little church, preceded by the Rev. J. O. Bent, one of Leslie's oldest and best-loved friends, and by the Rev. Edward Ker Gray, of St. George's Chapel, Piccadilly, another who well knew and valued the late comedian. Following or in the crowd were seen many familiar faces. Mr. Pottinger Stephen's description of the scene in the *Daily Telegraph* said :

“There is Lord Queensberry, deeply moved in spite of outward calm, and beside him, with the other chief mourners, Mr. George Edwardes, shaken to the soul, and again Mr. Lionel Brough, broken with grief; Mr. and Mrs. Fred Storey, Mr. Herbert Campbell, Mr. Jacobi, Mr. H. Edwardes, Mr. Charles Danby, Mr. Spencer Brown, Mr. Charles Harris, Mr. Fred Harris, Mr. George Musgrove, Mr. R. Martin, Mr. Charles Alias, Mr. Eric Lewis, Mr. Bantock, Mr. Sidney Howard, Mr. William Yardley, Mr. H. P. Stephens, Mr. Frank Parker, Mr. R. Barnard,

Miss Maggie Duggan, Mr. G. W. Anson, Mr. Mat Robson, Miss Letty Lind, Mrs. E. J. Lonnen, Mr. T. Smith, Mr. J. Harrison, Mr. Ernest Wells, Mr. John Le Hay, Mr. A. Shirley,



REV. J. O. BENT

Mr. S. Jones, Mr. George Howard, and a number of members of both sexes belonging to the chorus of the Gaiety Theatre."

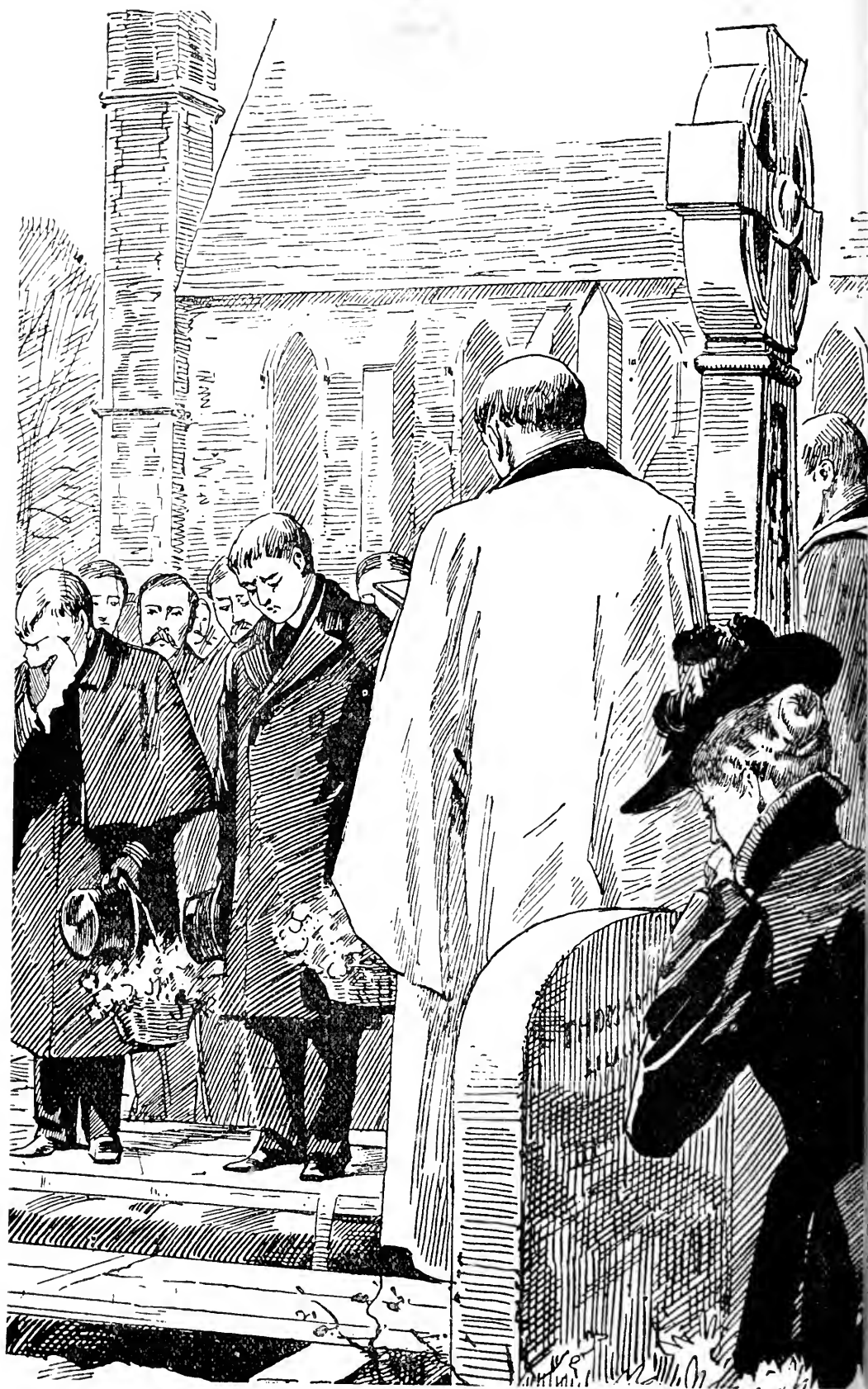
In addition to these there were by the graveside Mr. Edwin H. Shear (upon whom, as Leslie's secretary, had devolved the final arrangements at

the house of mourning), Mr. Wentworth Croke, Mr. W. G. Watts, Mr. T. Burn, Mr. Tom Smith, Mr. Henry Bedford, Miss Williams, Miss Davies, Miss Lily Grey, Miss Solomon, Miss Lockett, Mr. Payne, Mr. Wade, Mrs. Turton, Messrs. Spencer Browne, Denby Hare, G. Minshull, G. Sutton, Ernest Wells, T. Fraser, W. Bayliss, A. Playfair, S. Brown, Meyer Lutz, W. C. Watts, the Misses Akers, Herr Cozier, and doubtless many who were not identified.

Amongst others who were especially noticeable were the Rev. S. E. Chettoe, vicar of St. John's, Woolwich, where the deceased attended in his earlier years; also the two churchwardens, Mr. E. Morris and Mr. C. Sutherland. Many also of those present were the friends, schoolfellows, and associates of Mr. Leslie in musical, dramatic, or other walks of life, several being members of the Touchstone Dramatic Club or Bohemian Cycling Club, each of which honoured him as its president. In this category may be named Messrs. Bertram Hammond, F. G. Nichols, H. H. Barker, C. Jolly, J. H. Burchell, A. Ward, Leslie Hammond, Richard J. Jackson, J. Addison, J. Kirkman, F. Lovey, W. E. J. Miller, B. J. Hancock, F. Onslow, J. Agate, H. Mason, Mrs. W. T. Vincent, and Mrs. B. J. Hancock.

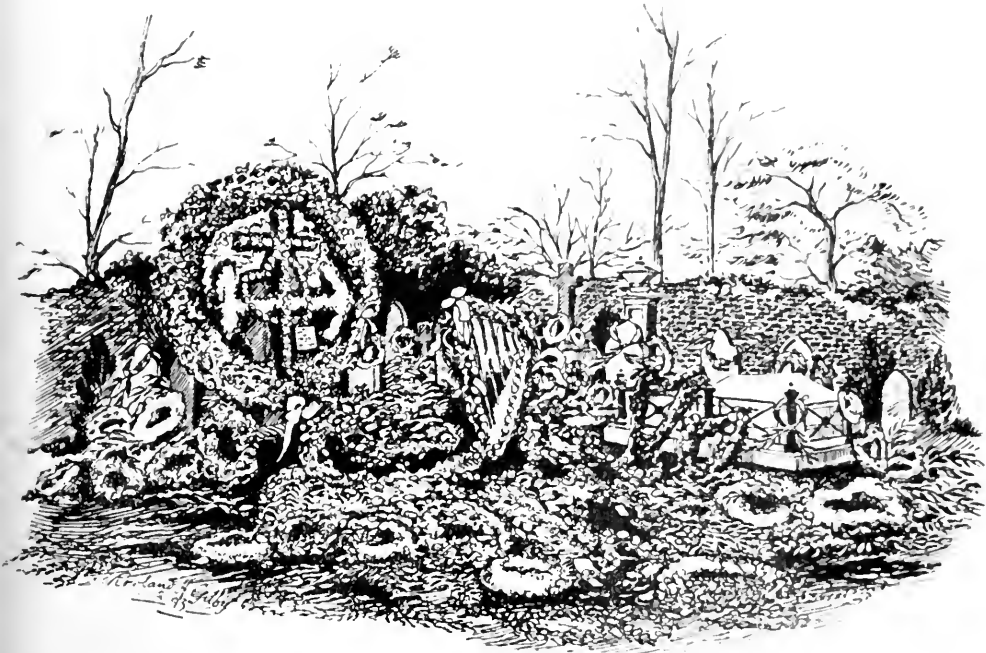
Mr. Bent read the whole service, his coadjutor simply pronouncing the responses. From the

church to the grave is but a few steps. The spot indeed is close to the edifice on the south side, next to the conspicuous marble slab which covers the tomb of Lord Teynham. The rustic cross which marked the resting-place of Louie, Mr. Leslie's wife, who died eighteen months before, had been removed to a little distance, and was the object of interest second only to the grave itself. Here the spectacle was most impressive and affecting. Standing on the raised mound of sand all alone were the two sons of the deceased, sobbing intensely as they gazed into the yawning pit which robbed them of father and mother and left them an orphaned heritage to the pity of the world. Each had in his trembling hands a basket of flowers to be cast on the coffin lid. Behind them stood the three afflicted brothers—the fourth, the eldest, Mr. Joseph Hobson, was taken seriously ill in the chamber of death, and was unable to be present—and then came the other mourners, somewhat hampered by the eager and impassioned crowd of people. Mr. Bent's clear voice rang out resonant on the frosty air as he pronounced the solemn service for the dead, and every syllable must have been distinctly heard, even to the very outskirts of the great assembly. The rev. gentleman's eye was moist, but he subdued his feelings, yet did not fail to impress the congregation with his affection for the friend



THE GRAVESIDE. (FROM "DAILY GRAPHIC.")

who as boy and man he had held so dear to his heart; the emphasis which he laid upon certain words in the solemn ritual having a meaning which could hardly be unnoticed or misunderstood. He made no address at the close, but he said a few words of comfort to the boys, gave one



WREATHS AT THE CEMETERY

lingering look into the chasm and turned away. Then the people thronged to see the last they will see on earth of the merry, generous, warm-hearted Fred Leslie, and all was over.

Charlton Cemetery had never before been the scene of such a gathering, and never did so many visitors besiege it as on Sunday, the day following the funeral, when, from the time the gates were

opened at one o'clock until they were closed at dusk, thousands of persons passed through. The crowds were so great and lingered so long that it was difficult for any but the most persistent to see the floral offerings, which lay all round the grave and beside the paths for a considerable distance, but the assistance of a constable was obtained, and the people were then induced to pass along. Many persons came down from London, and not a few of them brought wreaths and crosses to add to the display of affection; several also were taken to the cemetery by relatives and friends in the neighbourhood. On Monday the experience of Sunday was repeated in a milder degree, and every day during the week there were numbers of visitors.

SPECIAL SERVICE AT ST. JOHN'S.

It was not generally known that the Sunday morning service at St. John's, Woolwich, was to be devoted to the memory of the departed friend and former member of the congregation, or the building would have been inconveniently crowded. As it was, the church was well filled, and most of the Hobson family, who worship there, were present. The whole service was of a funereal character: special hymns, and an appropriate anthem, "Oh, holy city! no shadows yonder," from Gaul's cantata, being sung.

The funeral sermon was preached by the vicar, the Rev. S. E. Chettoe, from :

Revelation of St. John, xx. 12, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." The subject was the aspect of death as presented to us by St. John. In some solemn moment of life he had passed in vision within the veil, and what was revealed to him he has partly written down for us, though he has not attempted to describe in mortal language all the ineffable wonders of eternity. When the heart is low with sorrow for some dear friend who has passed through the trembling curtains of death, it yearns not for any detailed knowledge of the circumstances of the other life, but for the assurance that the dead live, and that they live in the presence of God. That we have, if we believe St. John. Towards the close of the sermon reference was made to the lamented death of Mr. Fred Leslie. Said the preacher : "We are all thinking of the premature close of a great career ; by such a term we can fitly describe the professional life of the late Mr. Fred Leslie, for through the possession of extraordinary talents and by hard work he had not merely risen to the front rank of his calling, but among his compeers he was *facile princeps*. Though brilliant his success, yet in the opinion of those competent to judge he had within him such powers as would have led him even to greater honour in the future in the higher dramatic art. It is beyond our power to give due expression to the honour he had attained in his profession ; suffice it to say, that he had deservedly won the regard and admiration of the greatest and the least, not only in our own, but also in other countries ; and it was most touching yesterday at the graveside to see from rich and poor the many tributes of affection and regard to his honoured memory. He had great gifts and had diligently used them. Most of you in this church knew him best, not as an actor, but as a friend. It is in the

home life that you have the truest test of a man's real character. We therefore sorrow most because we knew him as a loving and devoted son to his mother, an affectionate and honoured brother, a cherished and true friend. We know best what an irreparable loss his sorrowing and mourning relatives have sustained in his deeply lamented death. We of this church walk together in the House of God as friends, we are all one family, and when one member suffers all the members suffer with it; hence our real sorrow and sincere sympathy with Leslie's nearest and dearest friends. It is not always easy for a thoughtful, honest man or woman to acknowledge and say that God in his wisdom and love has taken away some one whose life seemed to be unspeakably precious, and whose death is an unspeakable bereavement to his family, or a loss to his nation; yet we breathe to man in humble tones the consolation which the Church bids to be given to all mourners in her beautiful burial service, 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.'"

The Dead March in *Saul* was played on the organ at the conclusion of the sermon.

MEMORIAL SERVICE IN LONDON.

On the morning of Sunday, December 11th, a memorial service was held at St. George's Chapel, Albemarle Street, W., at which the Rev. Dr. E. Ker Gray, the incumbent, officiated, and preached the special sermon for the occasion. The choir was augmented by friends and colleagues of the deceased actor, who had expressed their desire to aid in the service.

The following article appeared in the *Kentish Independent*, the editor of which had been Leslie's life-long friend, associate and counsellor :

“CHARLTON CEMETERY, Dec. 10th, 1892

“Saturday, the 10th of December, will henceforth be a date historical, and of memories sad, not only in our local annals, but in every calendar and monument which deals with the present generation of Englishmen. The funeral of the Woolwich actor, who bounded into fame and fortune, was no mere local event, and we were allowed to have no monopoly of mourning. His earliest affections remained deep-rooted here, but much of the love and admiration which we had for him had come to be shared by all the world. Therefore, even in our most selfish sorrows, we cannot begrudge the national demonstration which overshadowed the more intense, but less conspicuous, expressions of our own regrets. The honour done to our dead friend by the rank, wealth, and talent of the land only enhances the pride we had in him ; the assembly at his grave of men and women noble and distinguished in their several ranks of life are so many testimonials that he whom we held to our hearts was worthy to be loved by all mankind. Seldom in this country has there been a burial more solemn or sad ; never one of more sincere laments or warmer manifestations of regard. Such a display of tributes to the dead has probably never been seen on any occasion save one, and that was at the funeral of Prince Albert Victor, whose last appearance at a public entertainment was in the Gaiety Theatre, when poor Fred Leslie performed in the same piece in which he performed on the night that he was taken home to die. These floral emblems were four hundred in number, and some of them are said to have cost fifty pounds apiece. The whole collection must have cost at least four hundred pounds. It has been often complained that the money spent upon flowers at funerals

might be better devoted to perpetuating the memory of the departed in some more permanent, and perhaps more useful, method. There is little doubt of it, but at present the method has not been discovered which can replace the ready, the becoming, the poetical impulse of flowers. In the hour of bereavement, man craves for some outlet for the agony and the sympathy which rend the soul, and to forbid mankind to waste the flowers which are cast upon the grave only to wither is like a protest against the waste of tears. Such offerings, like our tears, express our emotions and relieve our pent-up grief, and they are not to be quenched or hindered by the reasonings of calm indifference or arguments of the utilitarian order. As to permanent memorials of Frederick Leslie, these we are sure to have. Among the profession in which he was so bright an ornament there is already a project for erecting a monument to his memory, and we shall be glad to hear that a separate scheme is on foot by which the friends of his youth and the sharers of his early associations resolve to testify in some practical shape the fond recollections they cherish of "dear old Fred." Monuments or not, the name alone will be enough to make of Charlton Cemetery a place of pilgrimage. But actors do not to the same extent as poets, painters, and sculptors, go down to posterity. They delight us while they live, but their works do not remain beyond contemporary memories. Therefore, though the knowledge and affection we possess are enough for us who live, let us make him monuments which shall tell to the generations which come after us what were the virtues of the genius who was born among us and has shed a lasting lustre over the place of his nativity.

While Leslie lay between life and death on the 2nd of December, *Cinder-Ellen*, the offspring of his genius, celebrated its 300th performance by

the Gaiety Company. Just one week previously he had played in it for the last time. In his absence Mr. Minshull did duty for him, and so continued to do until the withdrawal of the piece.

In their grievous loss the directors of the Gaiety Theatre were doubtful what to do. The burlesque of *Don Juan*, in which Leslie collaborated with Mr. Adrian Ross, was to have succeeded *Cinder-Ellen* on Boxing night, and Leslie was to have played Juan's tutor, "Pedrillo," but his decease quite upset the arrangement. *In Town*, which was being played by Mr. Arthur Roberts, Miss Florence St. John, and others at the Prince of Wales's, was hurriedly transferred to the Gaiety, and, being an excellent play, admirably acted, happily maintained the popularity of the theatre.



MR. MINSHULL

Among the plans which Leslie had before him at the time of his demise was the production of a farcical comedy adapted from the French by himself and Mr. Arthur Shirley, and named *Mrs. Othello*. It was produced at Toole's Theatre in November 1893. Shirley and he had also written together several farces which have never

seen the light. It was a project of his to transform Boucicault's *Arrah-na-Pogue* into a comic opera, with himself, of course, as "Shaun-the-Post." The share which he had in the authorship of the posthumous burlesque on the subject of *Don Juan* has been already referred to.

Mr. Paul Merritt writes :

Fred Leslie read a piece of mine about a year ago, to which he took a great fancy, and the very last time I saw him alive he verbally arranged with me to produce it as soon as he had a theatre of his own. The piece was a domestic comedy with farcical elements in the earlier, and pathetic elements in the latter, portion of it. I am convinced that had he lived to play the piece, he would have made a great hit in the leading character, which was a light comedy part of the Alfred Jingle order.

Many poetical effusions are written, among them the following :

From *Society*, Dec. 17, 1892 :

FRED LESLIE.

Fatal December shrouds the closing year,
With death's dark draperies drawn round the bier
Where lie the lovely, and the young, or old,
The poor, the parvenu—the man of gold—
Whose tale is told.

And now the grim and ghastly skeleton,
That steals our best and brightest, one by one,
Has ta'en the merriest mummer of them all,
And all too early came the spectral call :

Fred Leslie's fall.

Comes with the shock as though a comrade boon
Was stolen from us, in our friendship's noon,
'Mid light of love and laughter, jest and song,
Whose quips, and cranks, and antics kept us young,
And loosed each tongue.

To speak of him as a familiar friend,
Whose fund of mirth we little thought would end
In that grim ghastly joke that stills the voice,
At which the weary and world-worn rejoice :
But Hobson's choice.

Despite that strange coincidence of name,
It scarcely could be ; for Fred Leslie's fame
Was fresh and green, and all undimmed by age,
So late his humour sparkled on the stage :
He was the rage.

He tickled all those faculties which make
Us brighter, younger—keep the heart awake
To kindly impulse and to generous deed.
The lives we live such men as Leslie need
Dark hours to speed.

And brighten with the beams of broad burlesque,
To keep our souls from warping at the desk,
For life itself has such a tragic side,
We want the sunshine rippling on the tide,
Since Leslie died.

And over our dead Jester drop a tear,
And though the circle, stalls, and pit may hear
The topic songs that brought the wild encore,
Or witness his grotesque dance never more,
Let us one last libation silent pour
Fred Leslie o'er.

IN MEMORIAM : FRED LESLIE.

Among the laughter-loving sons of men
Upon the stage of Life, one actor moved,
Beloved beyond all others ; for in him
There seemed to meet all qualities, all arts
That kindle admiration man to man.
And when he drew his hand across the strings
Of human hearts, they answered to his touch,
With laughter or with tears just as he willed.
But chiefly for his "fooling" was he sought,
The wit, the versatility, the keen
Strong sense of *life* that flowed from him,
And gave to all he did its thoroughness.
Thus when the unrelenting hand of Death
Lowered the curtain, put the footlights out,
When yet it seemed the play was at its height ;
All those who loved him living, mourn him now,
And, as their laughter greeted him of old,
A tribute to the magic of his spell,
They pay to-day a deeper homage in
The tears of their farewell.

M. M. E.

From the *Kentish Independent*, Dec. 10, 1892 :

FRED LESLIE.

Died December 7, 1892.

Come winter, come, and touch my withered heart

With thy keen, icy fingers ;

Lingering, I wait thy summons to depart,

Even as the weary lingers

Over joys long departed.

For Death, the resistless, his keen dart has thrown

Into the bosom of our beloved, our own ;

And we are waiting at the gate alone,

All broken-hearted.

* * * * *

There is a wail of sorrow, gathering strength

Like the impetuous waves on the sea shingle,

Depthless in its depth and lengthless in its length,

As if all peoples of the earth did mingle

In one synchronous sorrow ;

The very skies are lightless ; the white snow

Mantled the earth as he died ; like as though

We might not know

Until "To-morrow."

Even from my heart I cannot write, or think

Of our beloved, and lost, in studied phrases ;

It is so sudden ; e'en now his death amazes

Me. The bitter cup my lips refuse to drink,

And my poor brain

In its intensest pain

Loathes the lewd level of a doggerel strain.

All things must fade ; the beauty
Of the stars, the sun, the moon ;
Death, in his inexorable duty,
Must their unutterable loveliness late or soon
Diminish.

The supernal splendour of the sun can be
Only for time, and not eternity.

The finish
Will be like thine beloved, in grief and sorrow,
Ah ! but immortalised by "The To-morrow."

Our beloved was courteous and manly ;
His very smile was like a blessing ;
Chivalrous as a Howard, or a Stanley ;
Upright in soul and stature ; and possessing
Wisdom and wit in balance, sweet and keen,
So that in equipoise his every act was seen.

His elastic genius was so many-sided ;
Under his artist hand the colours grew
Upon the glowing canvas. The brook glided
Amid grasses and forget-me-nots. The ethereal blue
Of the deep heavens dipped
Into the crimson and gold,
That tipped
The clouds' white pinions as they westward rolled.

The point of his swift pen was rainbow hued
Like as the bow at Heliconia's fount,
Not only he the laughing grace pursued,
But her sweet sister of the pensive mood,
Young Poesy ; whose lyre
Wakened the echoes of the classic mount
With strains that breathed of love, unsullied by desire.

The limitless fancy ; the sweet pathetic
Tenderness ; the nice frivolity ;
The lively satire, and the touch mimetic,
Ever his innocent mirth provoking jollity,
Will make our loved one's name impearled
In the sweet memories of a sorrowing world.

Like as a rushing river he swept by
The shoals of envy and the rocks of malice ;
From the white sources of a spotless life, too high
For even a bigot's frown ; the chalice
Of his pure life was rilled
From love's pure wine, brim-filled.

O mother of our immortal !
May we dare to say
That, in the olden day,
The Lacedemonian dam stood at her portal,
To welcome her son from the field,
" With, or on his shield " ?
Ah ! thou art no Spartan mother ;
Into thy heart this shaft—
Up to the haft—
Pierces, as could no other.

Mother, loved and beloved, on whom his eyes
In their infantile beauty first looked up,
Now to thy lips, by death's imprize,
Is tendered life's most bitter cup.
Can our swift-falling tears, our ceaseless grief,
Give to thine agony one solace brief,
One hour's relief ?
Then shall our tears fall down like April rain,
Fruitful to bring to thy heart peace again.

God comfort thee, poor mother ;
 Reft of thy eag^let, thy beloved ;
God comfort ye, each sister and each brother,
 Oh ! how the heart of England is moved,
 And yearns toward you ;
 Praying that God above,
 Out of his infinite love,
May all his infinite love afford you.

Dec. 7, 1892.

C. JOLLY.

From the *Brighton Gazette*, Dec. 10, 1892 :

IN MEMORIAM : FRED LESLIE.

Hush ! let the orchestra be dumb, the final curtain fall,
The play is o'er, and never more shall the actor hear the call,
For his last great exit he has made, from the World's vast
 stage of life,
And the dust and glare that are always there on the boards in
 this scene of strife.

Never again to enter with jest and song he loved so well,
Making the laughter ring around and the melody to swell.
For his life's last laugh is over, and the song itself is mute,
And we listen in vain to the joyous strain—there's a rift within
 the lute.

No more 'mid scenes of splendour, or the footlights blinding
 glare
Shall he crack his joke and nimbly dance with step as light as
 air.
For the night has come and the lights are out under the watch-
 man's eye,
And he's gone gone to Rest, sent off to sleep by the Angel's
 Lullaby.

But his joke and song will live alway in the hearts of his
 friends behind,
 Who have known his genial smile and voice, which have
 always been so kind.
 And the loss to men is greater far when they know that never-
 more
 Shall they see his face or clasp his hand till they meet on the
 Golden Shore.

FRANK HERBERT.

Dec. 8, 1892.

Fred Leslie's brothers, Charles and Thomas, were executors of his will, which left the bulk of his savings to his children. The amount of the personal estate was £16,113 16s. 10d.

The memorial card issued by the family read as follows :

*Leaves have their time to full,
 And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath
 And stars to set; but all,
 Thou hast all seasons for thine own, oh Death!*



TO THE
 LOVING MEMORY
 OF
 FREDERICK HOBSON
 (FRED LESLIE),
 Who died 7th December, 1892,
 Aged 37.

The lines above are quoted from Mrs. Hemans.

A granite obelisk, 14 feet in height, will mark Leslie's grave in Charlton Cemetery. On the pedestal is this inscription :—

In loving memory
OF
FREDERICK HOBSON
"FRED LESLIE,"
WHO DIED 7th DECEMBER, 1892,
AGED 37 YEARS.

"In the midst of life we are in death."





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Leslie

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